The Faerie Queene

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF EDMUND SPENSER

Edmund Spenser was born in London around 1552, although many details of his birth, even his parents' names, aren't known for certain today. He wasn't from an upper-class background, and so he received aid when he went to Pembroke College (now part of Cambridge). In 1580, he went to Ireland to fight Catholic rebels, fighting next to the famous British explorer and writer Walter Raleigh. Legend has it that he began writing *The Faerie Queene*—by far his most famous work today—while sitting under a tree in North Cork, Ireland, that lived until it was struck down by lightning in the 1960s. Spenser published the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* in 1590. Its publication earned him a modest life pension from Queen Elizabeth, but he didn't earn greater favor in the court and ended up spending much of his life in Ireland. He continued to write both long and short works, including the next three books of *The Faerie Queene*, which were published in 1596. Spenser died at age 46 while in London after being driven out of his castle in Ireland by Irish forces, and he is buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Faerie Queene is dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, and her reign is one of the most important historic events that provide context for the poem. For about a thousand years prior to the reign of Henry VIII, England had been a predominantly Catholic nation, but Henry VIII's disagreements with Pope Clement VII about the issue of divorce ultimately prompted England's transition toward Anglican Protestantism. The transition was often tumultuous—at one point, when the line of succession was disputed, the Protestant Lady Jane Grey ruled for nine days before being deposed and executed by the Catholic Mary Tudor (called "Bloody Mary" by her critics). Queen Mary herself, however, reigned for only a few years before being deposed and executed by her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth I, solidifying England's status as a Protestant nation. Violence between Catholics and Protestants didn't end, particularly in Ireland, where Spenser himself participated in the fight on behalf of the Protestants who supported Queen Elizabeth.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Both the style and subject matter of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* are deeply indebted to works that came before it, particularly from ancient Greece and Rome and from the Middle Ages. In fact, the whole writing style of the poem was archaic at the time Spenser wrote it, using words and phrasing that would have been more common in the time of writer Geoffrey Chaucer (*The Canterbury Tales*), who lived a couple hundred years before Spenser. Chaucer is specifically mentioned in *The Faerie Queene* and Spenser even re-uses some of Chaucer's characters. Spenser's constant references to Greek and Roman gods reflect the strong influence of classical epic poems on his work. Some of the most important influences are Homer (*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*), Virgil (*The Aeneid*), and Hesiod (a source for many Greek myths, particularly in *Theogony* and *Works and Days*). *The Faerie Queene* itself went on to become influential, and one of its most notable immediate successors is John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which is also a long epic poem that blends Greek and Roman myth with Christianity.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Faerie Queene
- **When Written:** Sometime between 1587 and 1596
- **Where Written:** North Cork, Ireland
- **When Published:** 1590 for the first three books, 1596 for the next three
- **Literary Period:** Elizabethan
- **Genre:** Epic Poem, Fantasy
- **Setting:** A mythical medieval-inspired place known as "faerie land"
- **Climax:** Each of the six books has a different climax in which one of the Faerie Queene's subjects uses their virtue to defeat a villain.
- **Antagonist:** False knights and pagans
- **Point of View:** Although the first-person narrator is a character, most of the book is told in the third person.

EXTRA CREDIT

Long Live the Queene. Although Edmund Spenser is not as widely read today as his contemporary William Shakespeare, *The Faerie Queene* has been cited as an influence on a wide range of pop culture works, ranging from books like *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *The Phantom Tollbooth* to the movie series *Star Wars* to the TV show *The Crown* and the video game series *Dark Souls*.

Stuck on the To-Read Pile. Although *The Faerie Queene* is dedicated to Elizabeth I and features several characters modeled on her, there is no conclusive evidence that she read even one of its over 36,000 lines.

PLOT SUMMARY

The Faerie Queene is broken into six books (with surviving fragments of a seventh book). Although the books share a narrator and some other recurring characters, for the most part, each book tells a self-contained story with different protagonists representing various virtues and with different antagonists that represent the heroes' opposites.

In Book I, the Redcross Knight, who represents holiness and who serves the Faerie Queene, travels with his lady Una and her dwarf. He has an enchanted **shield** that protects him with a red Christian cross on it. His ultimate goal is to find and slay the dragon that has been terrorizing Una's parents at their castle in Eden, but he has many adventures and faces many challenges before then. At one point, they encounter the fierce half-woman half-serpent monster Error, whom Redcross manages to slay. Later, the evil wizard Archimago disguises himself as a friendly old man and uses his illusion magic to make Redcross believe Una has been unfaithful, causing him to continue his journey without her. While separated from Una, Redcross is further led astray by the tricky sorceress Duessa in disguise as a fair maiden. A trio of Saracens named Sansfoy, Sansloy, and Sansjoy also cause trouble, fighting with Redcross and trying to kidnap Una while she's alone. Luckily, Prince Arthur comes to the rescue—he is the same Arthur who will eventually become the legendary King Arthur, and he protects Una and forms a friendship with Redcross. At the darkest part of the journey, Redcross encounters the monster Despair, but Una saves him at the last moment. After recovering for a while at a holy house, Redcross is finally strong enough to go slay the dragon, which he does after a fierce three-day battle. Redcross and Una can finally be married, although Redcross has to leave soon in order to fulfill his duties to the Faerie Queene.

Book II switches over to Sir Guyon, who represents temperance and who, like the Redcross Knight, also goes on adventures in service of the **Faerie Court**. After being defeated in the previous book, Archimago tries to convince Guyon to attack the Redcross Knight, but he's unsuccessful. Guyon then happens to run into Amavia, a woman who is dying. She tells him how her knight was killed by the evil pleasure-seeking witch Acrasia. On his way to Acrasia, Guyon ends up on an island devoted to idle pleasure, but his own temperate personality helps him escape it. Similarly, his temperance helps him in combat against hot-headed knights like the fiery Pyrochles. At last, Sir Guyon makes it to Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, which is filled with men who have fallen under her spells. Guyon resists temptation and destroys the bower, freeing the men it once held.

Book III focuses on Britomart, who represents chastity and who is unusual because she's the only major knight in the book who is a woman. She originally comes from Britain, but after seeing a vision of her eventual husband Arthegall (shown to her by the famous wizard Merlin), she becomes obsessed. She trains in knightly ways so that she can set out in search of Arthegall, taking along her nurse Glauce to act as her squire. Britomart meets and gravely wounds a knight named Marinell, who has been warned to avoid women but who will go on to marry the fair maiden Florimell (who is renowned for her chastity and wears a **gold belt**) in a later book. Britomart also meets Scudamore, who is looking to free his lady Amoretta from the evil wizard Busirane. Britomart tracks Busirane down and allows him to live on the condition that he free Amoretta at once.

Book IIII focuses partly on Cambell and Triamond, who embody the virtue of friendship. When Cambell holds a tournament to find a man worthy of marrying his sister Canacee, the three brothers Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond enter. Cambell slays Priamond and Diamond, and their souls get transferred to Triamond, who manages to hold his own against Canacee in marriage. Having earned Cambell's respect, Triamond and Cambell become great friends, with Cambell even marrying Triamond's sister Cambina. Meanwhile, many characters from the previous book continue their adventures. Without knowing each other's identities at first, Britomart and Arthegall meet and fight in a tournament, with Britomart being victorious. When they take off their helmets, however, Arthegall falls in love with Britomart and Britomart recognizes Arthegall as the man from her vision. Later, Amoretta is captured by a "savage" carle and Scudamore tries to save her. Arthur and his squire, Timias, help Amoretta escape the evil man, and eventually she is reunited with her beloved Scudamore.

Despite Britomart and Arthegall declaring their love for each other in Book IIII, Book V sees Arthegall traveling on his own (with his iron companion Talus) and representing the virtue of justice. Though Arthegall is a powerful man who subdues and punishes anyone unjust who stands in his way, he ends up defeated and captured by the Amazon queen Radigund, who humbles him and locks him up in a dungeon. Talus manages to inform Britomart of this situation, and she comes to rescue Arthegall, beheading Radigund in the process. Freed from captivity, Arthegall returns to his original goal of freeing an innocent woman named Eirena from an evil tyrant called Grantorto. He beheads Grantorto, and Eirena is restored to her rightful place on the throne.

Book VI follows Sir Calidore who, at the request of the Faerie Queene, is pursuing a monster called the Blatant Beast and who represents courtesy. Though Calidore is a good knight, he considers leaving it all behind when he witnesses the pastoral lives of some shepherds and particularly when he meets the beautiful shepherd's daughter Pastorella. Calidore lives peacefully with the shepherds for a while until suddenly some brigands attack and ransack the village. Many shepherds are killed or captured, and Calidore leads a daring rescue to get Pastorella back. After saving her, however, Calidore decides

that he must continue his quest to subdue the Blatant Beast, which continues to threaten the reputations of noble knights and ladies. Calidore finds the beast, muzzles it, and forces it to follow him like a tamed animal. Eventually, however, the Blatant Beast breaks free, and it continues to roam the world.

Only two cantos from the middle of Book VII survive. Mutabilitie (also called Change) is descended from titans and argues that she should rule heaven instead of Jupiter, but her challenge is unsuccessful. The seventh book, like *The Faerie Queene* in general, doesn't have a definitive ending because Spenser died before completing his planned 12 books.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Gloriana (The Faerie Queene) – Although she never appears in the story, the Fairie Queene, whose name is Gloriana, gives the poem its title and motivates much of its action—characters like the Redcross Knight, Sir Guyon, and Calidore serve her, while the recurring character Prince Arthur spends most of the book searching for her after seeing her in a vision. Gloriana rules judiciously over **Faerie Court** in faerie land and is admired by everyone who knows her—she is the paragon of a good ruler. Since *The Faerie Queene* is dedicated at the beginning to Queen Elizabeth (who reigned when Spenser wrote it), it seems clear that the character of the Faerie Queene is meant to be a flattering stand-in for her. More broadly, the Faerie Queene represents a unified and peaceful Protestant nation, which contrasted with the real Britain Spenser lived in, where there was bloody conflict between Protestants and Catholics.

Narrator – Although the narrator of the poem doesn't draw attention to himself for much of the story, he addresses the reader in the proem for each book and sometimes comments on the action, particularly in the first couple stanzas of a canto. The narrator resembles narrator characters from ancient Greek and Roman epic poems, often calling on the Muses to help tell his story better.

Arthur – Arthur, who is a prince during the events of *The Faerie Queene*, is the same Arthur from British mythology who eventually goes on to become King Arthur with the help of the powerful wizard Merlin. Rather than appearing as the protagonist of any of the poem's books, he appears as a helper figure in multiple books for knights like the Redcross Knight and Sir Guyon, sometimes accompanied by his loyal squire Timias. True to his legendary origins, Arthur is a larger-than-life figure who is not only one of the strongest and bravest knights in the story but also one of the most courteous and charitable. Arthur spends much of the story looking for the Faerie Queene, whom he saw in a dream, and like her, he represents an idealized version of Britain that was meant to reflect favorably on the real-world leadership of Queen Elizabeth.

Redcross Knight – The Redcross Knight is the protagonist of the first book of *The Faerie Queene* (and he also makes brief appearances in later books). His lover is the lady Una, and he becomes friends with Prince Arthur. The Redcross Knight is part elf and he wears dented armor, but his most distinctive feature is his **shield**, which features a red design in the shape of a Christian cross—the origin of his name. The Redcross Knight is a version of St. George (a real religious figure), who, according to legend, slayed a dragon. Like the legendary St. George, the Redcross Knight does eventually slay the dragon that is terrorizing Una and her family at their castle, although even after completing this heroic feat, the Redcross Knight continues to wander as part of his service to the Faerie Queene. As his shield suggests, the Redcross Knight embodies the virtue of holiness, and though he can be temporarily misled by tricks or foiled by strong adversaries, he always triumphs in the end.

Arthegall – Arthegall is a brave knight who is first introduced as the lady knight Britomart's future husband in Book III and who later goes on his own journey as the protagonist of Book V (in order to free Eirena from the clutches of Grantorto), where he represents the virtue of justice. Though Arthegall is bested by Britomart when they meet and fight due to a case of mistaken identity, he is a strong knight whose ideas about justice are strict and uncompromising. He rides with a metal man at his command named Talus who sometimes fights on his behalf, and he wields a powerful sword known as Chrysaor. Although Arthegall is ultimately a heroic character, he does occasionally go too far and has to be held back from slaying too many people. This demonstrates how justice can be tricky to carry out, even for a great knight like Arthegall.

Britomart – Britomart is the protagonist of Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, and she is a strong knight from Britain who represents the virtue of chastity. After Merlin shows her a vision of Arthegall with the promise that he'll be her future husband, Britomart is obsessed and trains in the ways of a knight so that she can set out to find him. She is accompanied by her old nurse Glauce, who acts as a squire. Even among the noble knights of the story, Britomart is one of the strongest, defeating her future husband Arthegall when they end up fighting due to a case of mistaken identity. With her helmet on, Britomart is frequently mistaken for a man, and she frequently surprises people when she takes it off. Although Gloriana is perhaps the character most associated with Queen Elizabeth, the virginal warrior Britomart also shares some resemblance with the queen, and her very name suggests pride in Britain.

Sir Guyon – Sir Guyon is the protagonist of Book II of The Faerie Queene, and he is a brave knight who embodies the virtue of temperance. He serves Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, and is guided for much of his journey by an old Palmer (pilgrim) who helps Sir Guyon stay on the right path and avoid temptation. Like the Redcross Knight, Sir Guyon comes from

faerie land, and he meets Redcross shortly after Redcross's victory over the dragon. When Sir Guyon encounters the dying woman Amavia, he finds out that she was mortally wounded by the evil sorceress Acrasia. Acrasia, who lives in the Bower of Bliss, represents excess and the opposite of temperance, and so it becomes Sir Guyon's mission to defeat her, which he does at the end of Book II.

Sir Scudamore – Sir Scudamore is a brave knight who falls in love with Amoretta when he sees her in the temple of Venus while obtaining the **shield** of love, and he ends up being the protagonist for much of Book IIII. When Amoretta is captured by the evil man Busirane, Scudamore is distraught and devotes himself to searching for her. Though he fights at first with the fellow knights Arthegall and Britomart, he eventually comes to see them as allies, and Britomart is the one who ultimately frees Amoretta from her imprisonment at the hands of Busirane.

Calidore – Calidore is the protagonist of Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, and he is a well-liked knight from **Faerie Court** who serves the Faerie Queene and who embodies the virtue of courtesy. At the request of his queen, he sets out to stop the Blatant Beast, although he gets distracted along the way and nearly gives up his whole quest in order to live a pastoral life.

Duessa – Duessa is an evil witch who is originally introduced as the lady of the pagan Sansfoy. In fact, she isn't a fair lady but an old hag who disguises her appearance. In Book I she tricks the Redcross Knight (by pretending to be a faithful woman named Fidessa), but she is found out and punished by being exiled into the woods. She continues to deceive noble knights, however, and is eventually put on trial in Book V. Duessa represents the opposite of the true and virtuous Una, and she seems to also represent Catholicism, which could appear similar to Protestantism on the surface, but which for many Protestants in Spenser's time was considered a false religion, just as Duessa is false.

Una – Una is a fair maiden who loves and eventually marries the Redcross Knight. Her parents are king and queen of a kingdom located where the Biblical Garden of Eden was located, and their castle has been taken over by an evil dragon. Although Archimago tricks the Redcross Knight into believing Una was sleeping with someone else, one of Una's defining qualities is that she is always faithful to the Redcross Knight and always trusts in him, even when she is kidnapped or in trouble. She embodies the role of a virtuous woman in the poem.

Florimell – Florimell is a fair maiden who undergoes numerous misfortunes on her way to eventually marrying Marinell. She wears a **gold belt**, which she loses when she is attacked by a wild beast and which Sir Satyrane recovers. At one point, a hag creates a false version of Florimell that is so convincing that some people, like Braggadochio, believe it's even better than the real Florimell. Florimell is attacked at sea and rescued by Proteus, but Proteus tries to woo her and eventually imprisons her in his dungeon. At last, however, Florimell is let out, and her marriage to Marinell is a grand event held at Proteus's house.

Sir Satyrane – Satyrane is a wandering noble knight who helps Una out of a forest when she is separated from the Redcross Knight. He fights Sansloy in Book I before later reappearing in Book III to help save the fair maiden Florimell from a fearsome hyena-like beast. His name, which is similar to "satyr" (a half-man half-goat), suggests his close association with nature and the forest.

Amoretta (Amoret) – Amoretta (sometimes also called Amoret) is a beautiful maiden and a twin sister of Belphoebe, who is taken from her nymph mother at a young age and raised by Venus. Sir Scudamore falls in love with Amoretta when he sees her in the temple of Venus, but eventually they get separated. Britomart helps protect Amoretta from an enchanter named Busirane who torments her until eventually she is at last reunited with Scudamore.

Archimago (The Sire) Archimago (originally introduced as "the Sire") is an evil wizard who specializes in deception. He causes problems in Book I when he tricks the Redcross Knight into believing that his lady Una has become lusty and unfaithful to him, causing him to leave without her. He reappears near the end of Book I but is foiled again by Redcross.

Sansfoy –Sansfoy, Sansloy, and Sansjoy are three Saracens (an old term that usually meant Muslims or sometimes "pagans" in general) who are brothers and who each oppose the noble Redcross Knight on his journey. Sansfoy is the first of the brothers to be introduced (along with his lady Duessa, who is a witch in disguise). When he is slain, his brothers promise to avenge him, but over the course of the poem, they too are slain, despite often receiving unfair advantages in battle.

Braggadochio – Braggadochio is a recurring villain who first appears in Book II after stealing Sir Guyon's horse. He travels with Trompart, a servant who is forced into serving Braggadochio and soon learns how to flatter him. As his name suggests, Braggadochio boasts a lot but often can't back up his boasts with actions, choosing to run away from conflict. Braggadochio represents the opposite of a good knight, showing some outward signs of bravery but ultimately proving himself to be nothing more than a coward.

Acrasia – Acrasia is an evil, pleasure-seeking sorceress who lives in the Bower of Bliss and who is the main antagonist of Book II. Since Book II is about the temperate Sir Guyon, Acrasia represents the opposite of temperance, luring men like Sir Mordant to their deaths by causing them to seek too much pleasure. Ultimately, she is defeated by Sir Guyon, which demonstrates the superiority of the virtue of temperance.

Timias – Timias is Arthur's faithful squire who accompanies him on many of his quests. Like Arthur, Timias is always ready to

help passersby in need. He eventually falls in love with the fair huntress Belphoebe, but after being tempted by another woman (Belphoebe's twin sister Amoretta), he forces himself to do penance by living humbly until he is worthy again of her love. Eventually, Timias completes his penance and is restored in Belphoebe's favor, and he reunites with Arthur.

Talus – Talus is Arthegall's metal companion and seems to be something like an early version of a robot. He wields a flail and can be merciless, with Arthegall often having to restrain him from slaying too many people. Talus represents an absolute idea of justice, which is balanced out by the more nuanced ideas of justice expressed by Arthegall and other characters.

Belphoebe – Belphoebe is a huntress maiden of the forest who eventually becomes lady of Timias (the squire of Arthur) after rescuing him in the woods. When Timias is tempted to be unfaithful to Belphoebe with her twin sister Amoretta, she becomes angry with him, and he spends a long time doing penance and living humbly until he is finally worthy of her again. With her chastity and her warrior spirit, she is another character that resembles Queen Elizabeth.

Marinell – Marinell is a knight who lives by the sea and who has been told by his mother, the nymph Cymoent, to avoid women because one will be his downfall. But he is quick to pick fights and challenges Britomart, not realizing (because she's wearing armor) that she is a woman. Marinell ends up badly wounded. Eventually, he recovers and ends up marrying the fair maiden Florimell in a grand ceremony held at the house of Proteus.

The Dragon – The climax of Book I is when the Redcross Knight confronts the dragon that has been terrorizing the castle of Una's parents, the king and queen. The dragon is a fearsome foe who takes many days to defeat, showing how strong the powers of evil are. In the end, however, the dragon falls to the Redcross Knight, echoing the legend of St. George, the brave knight who slew a dragon.

Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond – Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond are three brother knights who, for most of their lives, do everything together. They have a sister named Cambina who eventually marries Cambell. Their mother gets a warning from the Fates that the three brothers won't live long, so she makes a deal that when one brother dies, his soul will be passed on to the next one. Eventually, the three brothers enter a tournament to face Cambell in battle for the hand in marriage of his sister Canacee. Cambell slays Priamond and Diamond, but with the help of his brothers' souls, Triamond fights Cambell to a draw and emerges triumphant. Triamond marries Canacee, and he and his new brother-in-law Cambell bond over shared knightly values. Their friendship is on display at a tournament of knights where the two collaborate to help each other, and it provides a sharp contrast with the false friendship of Blandamour and Paridell, which breaks down under adversity.

Blandamour – Blandamour is a crooked knight who keeps company with equally disreputable knights like Paridell and Braggadochio. He is boastful and fickle, falling in love with Amoretta first, then "Florimell" (actually a false Florimell that is actually a sprite in disguise). When a big tournament of knights is held, Blandamour does poorly, emphasizing his inferiority to the more virtuous knights in the story.

Proteus – Proteus is a god with the gift of prophecy who warns Marinell that a woman will be his downfall. At one point, he rescues the maiden Florimell but then tries to woo her unsuccessfully and ends up keeping her as a prisoner in his dungeon. Eventually, however, Proteus relents, and the wedding of Marinell and Florimell takes place in his house.

Paridell – Paridell is a knight that Sir Satyrane meets after they are both denied hospitality at Malbecco's castle. Eventually, Malbecco relents and lets them inside, but Paridell soon runs off with Malbecco's wife Hellenore, only to abandon her in the woods soon afterwards. Paridell is noted for his fickleness and sometimes even changes sides mid-battle.

Cambell – Cambell is the brother of Canacee, the friend of Triamond, and the husband of Cambina (Triamond's sister). Though Book IIII mentions Cambell and Triamond's virtuous friendship in the subtitle, they play a relatively small role in the book. Cambell is a powerful—at times, seemingly invincible—knight who one day welcomes any challengers who would like to marry his sister. Cambell defeats and slays Triamond's brothers, Priamond and Diamond, but due to a deal their mother made with the Fates, Triamond acquires the souls of his two dead brothers and comes to a stalemate with Cambell. The two become friends and support each other later in the tournament of knights.

The Blatant Beast – The Blatant Beast shows up briefly at the end of Book V, then becomes the main villain of Book VI, with Calidore chasing after it. The beast is doglike and known for having lots of teeth and all kinds of tongues—some human and some animal. The beast's fearsome mouth reflects how it is an embodiment of slander and gossip, since its poison bite can destroy otherwise reputable knights and ladies. Though Calidore defeats and muzzles the Blatant Beast for a while, it eventually escapes through unknown means, suggesting how powerful and enduring slander can be.

Grantorto – Grantorto is a tyrant who is the main villain of Book V and who imprisons the innocent Eirena. Arthegall is on a quest from the Faerie Queene to defeat him and free her. To lure Arthegall to him, he sets a deadline that he will kill Eirena if Arthegall doesn't come to challenge him personally by a certain date. Arthegall just barely makes the deadline, and the two of them fight. Though he is strong, Grantorto ends up with his ax stuck in Arthegall's shield, and so Arthegall decapitates him, freeing Eirena.

Cymochles – Cymochles is an evil knight who has pledged

himself to the pleasure-seeking sorceress Acrasia and who clashes with Sir Guyon. Eventually, he teams up with the fiery knight Pyrochles, in hopes of taking down Sir Guyon together. Though Cymochles is a mighty knight, his mistake is pledging his loyalty to the tricky Acrasia.

The Lion – The Lion is a fearsome wild animal that is nevertheless tamed by Una's grace and beauty. It travels with her and protects her after she is separated from the Redcross Knight, although eventually it is slain by Sansloy. Lions have symbolic significance in both the Bible and British history, and this Lion represents how the faithful like Una will be protected when they need it most.

Orgoglio – Orgoglio is an evil giant who schemes with Duessa and who defeats a weakened Redcross Knight in battle, taking him prisoner in his dungeon. Though Orgoglio is a powerful and proud fighter, Prince Arthur manages to defeat him in battle, and when Orgoglio dies, all that remains is an empty bladder—showing how empty Orgoglio's pride really was.

Merlin – Merlin is one of the most famous wizards in literature, although he plays only a minor part in *The Faerie Queene*. As with other versions of his character, he plays a role in helping young Arthur on his way to becoming king, and he also plays a role in the story of the knight Britomart, showing her a vision of her eventual husband Arthegall.

Eirena – Eirena is a fair maiden who is being held captive by a tyrant named Grantorto. Arthegall spends much of Book V trying to free her (although he gets sidetracked along the way) until at last Grantorto sets a deadline where Arthegall must challenge him in battle by a certain date or Eirena will die. Locked in a dungeon, Eirena doesn't realize that Arthegall comes to her rescue in time and believes that she will be condemned to death, until she finds out at the last minute that Arthegall has defeated Grantorto.

Despair – Despair is a monster who leads brave knights to kill themselves. Sir Terwin is one of its many victims. The Redcross Knight encounters Despair and is tempted by him, but ultimately is saved when Una stops him from stabbing himself. This frustrates Despair and causes the monster itself to attempt suicide, but despite causing other knights to die, Despair is doomed to always stay alive.

Canacee – Canacee is the sister of Cambell and eventual wife of Triamond. In order to find a worthy husband for her, Cambell organizes a tournament where he will personally face all challengers. During the tournament, Cambell slays Priamond and Diamond, but their youngest brother Triamond survives and gets to marry Canacee, cementing the friendship between him and Cambell.

Sir Turpine – There are actually two characters named Sir Turpine. One is captured by Amazons serving their queen Radigund and eventually put to death. The more significant Sir Turpine, however, is a rude man in Book VI who torments Calepine and Serena. Eventually Arthur confronts him and defeats him, letting him live if he gives up the knighthood, but Sir Turpine doesn't change his ways. Finally, Arthur, with help from the savage man, defeats Sir Turpine again and steals his armor, tying Turpine upside-down to a tree as a warning to other false knights.

Mercilla – Mercilla is a just and merciful queen who, like the Faerie Queene and Britomart, is another flattering stand-in for the real Queen Elizabeth. One of her most notable actions is to hold a trial for the false sorceress Duessa, which could be interpreted as a reflection of the real-life trial of the deposed Catholic monarch Queen Mary by the new Protestant monarch Queen Elizabeth.

The carle – The carle is an unnamed wild man who lives in the woods and who rapes and eats women. He captures Amoretta and Aemylia. Though he is based on racist stereotypes of a "savage," he may also be a parody of Catholics, who believe in literally eating the body of Christ during communion (which is "cannibalism" to Protestants like Spenser who believe the Eucharist is only symbolic).

Dame Cœlia – Dame Cœlia is the mother of Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa. She is the matron of a holy house where the Redcross Knight recovers after his encounter with Despair, and her virtue, along with that of her daughters, helps fortify the Redcross Knight for the final part of his quest in Book I.

Placidas – Placidas is a squire being chased by the evil Corflambo who asks Arthur for help. His friend Amyas has been imprisoned where Corflambo's daughter Poeana watches over him. Poeana loves Amyas, so Placidas pretends to be him in order to escape. After Corflambo is dead, Arthur asks Placidas to overlook his daughter Poeana's past sins, and Placidas takes her as his wife.

Squire of Dames – The Squire of Dames is a squire who was asked by his lady to "do service unto gentle Dames." When he ends up winning favor in the hearts of 300 women, however, his lady scolds him and tells him to do the opposite, finding 300 women who will reject him.

Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa – Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa are the three daughters of Dame Cœlia, who runs a holy house where the Redcross Knight recovers after his encounter with Despair. The three daughters represent faith, hope, and charity respectively, and their virtue helps the Redcross Knight heal not only physically but spiritually as well.

Sir Calepine – Sir Calepine is the knight of the lady Serena. When Serena is wounded by the Blatant Beast and Calepine tries to carry her across a river, Sir Turpine just watches them and laughs. He continues to have conflict with Sir Turpine until at last Arthur defeats the rude Turpine and takes away his knightly equipment.

Mirabella – Mirabella is a fair lady who has been condemned to roam the world with Scorn and Disdain tormenting her as

punishment. She comes from low birth, but her beauty led men to their doom, causing Cupid to punish her. Though her punishment is painful, she accepts it, wandering around until she saves as many men as she "killed."

Pastorella – Pastorella is a fair maiden who lives among shepherds and who temporarily distracts Calidore from his quest to find the Blatant Beast. Coridon is the shepherd most in love with Pastorella, but she prefers Calidore. She and other shepherds get kidnapped by brigands, but Calidore saves them, although eventually he has to leave to continue his quest to find the Blatant Beast.

Hellenore – Hellenore is the wife of Malbecco. He is a stingy and jealous man who tries to hide his wife from visitors. Resenting her husband, Hellenore runs off with the visiting knight Paridell, but he soon abandons her. Left all alone, Hellenore eventually gets taken in by some satyrs in the woods and decides to stay with them.

Mutabilitie (Change) – Mutabilitie (also called Change) is the protagonist of the two cantos that survive from Spenser's seventh book in *The Faerie Queene* (he planned twelve books but only fully completed six). She is descended from titans and tries to argue that she is more powerful than Jupiter and so should rule heaven, but she is unsuccessful.

The Lady of Delight (Malecasta) – The Lady of Delight (also called Malecasta) is the lady of a castle themed after Venus. When she sees Britomart in her armor, she thinks Britomart is a man and falls in love with her. But when she tries to embrace Britomart at night, Britomart fights back and runs away.

The Palmer The Palmer is an elderly religious pilgrim who travels around with Sir Guyon and helps the knight grow in virtue. The holy man isn't just a physical guide for Sir Guyon but also a spiritual one, often functioning in the role of Sir Guyon's conscience. He wisely discourages Sir Guyon from getting into needless fights with other knights and heeding the songs of deceptive mermaids, and encourages him to develop the virtue of temperance, or self-restraint. He can also pacify wild beasts with his staff. When he is separated from the Palmer, Sir Guyon is more susceptible to various temptations. Thanks to the Palmer's guidance, Sir Guyon ultimately becomes wiser and more moderate over the course of their travels.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Sansloy – Along with his brothers Sansfoy and Sansjoy, Sansloy is a Saracen (an old term that usually meant Muslims or sometimes "pagans" in general) who opposes the noble Redcross Knight on his journey. After Sansfoy is slain, Sansloy promises to avenge him, but he is eventually slain himself.

Sansjoy – Along with his brothers Sansfoy and Sansloy, Sansjoy is a Saracen (an old term that usually meant Muslims or sometimes "pagans" in general) who opposes the noble Redcross Knight on his journey. After Sansfoy is slain, Sansjoy promises to avenge him, but he is eventually slain himself.

Glauce – Glauce is Britomart's elderly nurse who acts as something like a squire to her after Britomart ventures out in search of her future husband Arthegall. She is sensible and often provides Britomart with advice.

Una's Dwarf – Many characters in The Faerie Queene have a dwarf who acts as a servant and helps them while traveling. Una's dwarf is the most significant of these characters, often acting as an intermediary between his lady and the Redcross Knight whenever Una is in trouble.

Pyrochles – Pyrochles is an evil knight who, spurred on by Furor and Occasion, clashes with Sir Guyon. His servant is Atin, and he eventually allies himself with Cymochles. Pyrochles is strongly associated with fire—his shield reads "Burnt Do I Burn"—and this represents his hot temper.

Furor and Occasion – Furor is a wounded man who acts like he's insane, and Occasion is his blind hag mother. Together, the two of them inspire violence and discord wherever they go.

Lucifera – Lucifera is the lady of the House of Pride, a crucial stop on the Redcross Knight's journey. She is the daughter of Pluto (god of the underworld). She is a tyrant who rides around on beasts named after the seven deadly sins.

Cambina – Cambina is the sister of Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond. Although Cambell kills two of her brothers, she eventually marries him, cementing the friendship between Cambell and Triamond (the surviving brother, who marries Cambell's sister Canacee).

Radigund – Radigund is queen of a tribe of Amazons who temporarily capture and humble Arthegall. Her maid Clarinda watches Arthegall when he's in captivity. She is a proud and powerful warrior, but when Britomart comes to rescue Arthegall, she ends up beheading Radigund in battle.

Amavia – Amavia is a dying woman who inspires the temperate Sir Guyon to seek revenge on Acrasia, the evil witch who killed Amavia's lover Sir Mordant. She dies soon after speaking to Guyon.

Sir Mordant – Sir Mordant is Amavia's lover and becomes one of many men who fall under the sorceress Acrasia's spell. He is so deeply under her spell, in fact, that when he tries to escape her Bower of Bliss, he dies soon afterwards.

The Savage Man – The savage man from Book VI (not to be confused with the carle, who is also described as a savage man) has noble blood in him, despite his rough outer appearance. He helps Arthur, Sir Calepine, and Serena as they oppose the rude Sir Turpine.

Phaedria – Phaedria is a fair lady who escorts both Cymochles and Sir Guyon to an island dedicated to idle pleasure. Though Sir Guyon is tempted by the island's delights, the temperate knight ultimately comes to his senses and flees.

Malbecco – Malbecco is a very greedy man who doesn't like providing hospitality to knights in her castle, including Paridell and Sir Satyrane. When Paridell runs off with Malbecco's wife Hellenore and also sets Malbecco's money on fire, Malbecco goes to save the money first.

Scorn and Disdain – Scorn is a fool with a whip and Disdain is a giant (and a cousin of Orgoglio) with a heavy iron club. Together, they travel with Mirabella and punish her on Cupid's behalf for "killing" men with her beauty.

Cymoent – Cymoent is a water nymph and the protective mother of the knight Marinell, who warns him to avoid women, then takes care of him after he is gravely wounded by the lady knight Britomart.

Busirane – Busirane is an evil sorcerer who kidnaps the fair Amoretta and tortures her. Britomart defeats him, however, and in exchange for his life, he agrees to let Amoretta go.

Coridon – Coridon is a shepherd who loves Pastorella and competes (unsuccessfully) for her affection against Calidore. When many shepherds are kidnapped by brigands, Coridon escapes to ask Calidore for help and help him free Pastorella.

Venus – Venus is the goddess of love and the mother of Cupid. A temple to Venus plays a key role in Book IIII when Scudamore travels there to retrieve a shield and meet Amoretta.

Ate – Ate is an old hag who rides with the false sorceress Duessa in Book IIII, and she is known as the mother of all discord, having been a powerful force throughout history. She specializes in creating arguments and tries to get knights to fight with each other.

Serena – Serena is the lady of Sir Calepine. She gets badly wounded by the Blatant Beast, but Calepine cares for her. Sir Turpine, meanwhile, rudely refuses them any hospitality, despite Serena's grave injuries. She is captured by cannibals but eventually Calepine frees her.

Clarinda – Clarinda is the maid of the Amazon queen Radigund, and she watches over Arthegall when he's in Radigund's captivity. She schemes to win Arthegall's affection and is disappointed when he remains faithful to Britomart.

Blandina – Blandina is the lady of the rude Sir Turpine. She schemes with him and tries to protect him from Arthur.

Error – Error is a half-woman, half-snake monster that lives in darkness. When she dies, her children eat her flesh until they themselves burst and die.

Mammon – Mammon is a personification of greed who tries (unsuccessfully) to tempt Sir Guyon with extravagant wealth while Sir Guyon is in the underworld.

Munera – Munera is the sorceress daughter of the Saracen Pollente who spends her time lying on a heap of gold. Arthegall and Talus punish her greed by chopping off her hands and feet, then throwing her body to drown in mud.

Bead-men – The seven Bead-men live in the house of Dame Cœlia, where the Redcross Knight recovers after encountering Despair. They represent the opposite of the seven deadly sins from the House of Pride.

Contemplation – Contemplation is an old man that the Redcross Knight meets while staying at the holy house of Dame Cœlia. Though he is full of grace, he sometimes gets too distracted by his own heavenly thoughts.

Mercy – Mercy lives in the house of Dame Cœlia, where the Redcross Knight recovers after encountering Despair. She is the embodiment of the virtue mercy, and she guides him to meet contemplation.

Briana and Crudor – Briana is a lady who torments traveling knights because the knight Crudor is too proud to accept her love. Calidore intervenes and gets Crudor to accept Briana, causing her to repent of her past ways.

Poeana – Poeana is the daughter of the evil man Corflambo, and she oversees his dungeon. She falls in love with Amyas but gets tricked when Placidas pretends to be him. After the death of Corflambo, she becomes less proud and marries Placidas.

Sir Sanglier – Sir Sanglier is an immoral knight who beheads his own lady and steals the lady of a squire that he likes better. Arthegall tracks him down with Talus and forces him to carry around the head of his former lady as punishment.

Care – Care is a blacksmith who makes a lot of noise and doesn't let Scudamore get any sleep when he visits.

Pollente – Pollente is an evil Saracen who charges a toll on a bridge and gives the money to his daughter Munera. He ends up being slain in a fight with Arthegall.

Corflambo – Corflambo is an evil man who rides a camel and can kill with his stare. He chases the squire Placidas and has a daughter named Poeana. Arthur beheads him.

Amyas – Amyas is a squire and a friend of Placidas. He gets imprisoned by Corflambo, where Corflambo's daughter Poeana keeps watch in the dungeon and falls in love with him. Eventually, with help from Arthur, Amyas's friend Placidas gets him free.

Melibee – Melibee is a peaceful shepherd and Pastorella's father. When several shepherds are kidnapped by brigands, Melibee ends up being killed.

The Sultan and Adicia – The Sultan and Adicia are a husband and wife who plot to overthrow the just queen Mercilla. Arthegall foils their plot, killing Sultan. Adicia is so enraged by this that she goes off wandering the world and turns into a tiger.

Sir Bellamoure and Claribell – Sir Bellamoure and Claribell are Pastorella's parents, although they were separated from Pastorella shortly after her birth and don't see her again until she happens to visit their castle after being rescued by Sir

Calidore. (This Claribell is different from Philemon's lover.)

Tristram – Tristram is a noble young man who is the son of a British king. Calidore is impressed to see Tristram defend himself from an attacking knight even though Tristram doesn't have armor of his own.

Sclaunder – Sclaunder (like "slander") is an old hag who lives in the woods and spreads poisonous words about noble knights.

Priscilla and Aladine – Priscilla and Aladine are lovers, although Aladine comes from a lower status than Priscilla. Aladine gets badly wounded, but Calidore helps by killing the knight who injured him.

Bracidas – Bracidas is the elder brother of Amidas and is in a land dispute with him that Arthegall helps solve. His betrothed, Philtera, leaves him for his brother, while his brother's betrothed, Lucy, ends up with Bracidas instead.

Amidas – Amidas is the younger brother of Bracidas. During a land dispute, the two of them end up swapping fiancées, with Philtera going to Amidas and Lucy going to Bracidas. Arthegall helps them resolve their dispute.

Geryoneo – Geryoneo is a landlord with six arms and six legs who feeds Belgae's children to a monster. He puts up a fight in battle against Arthur before being slain.

Aemylia – When Amoretta is captured by the carle, Aemylia is already one of his prisoners, and she explains to Amoretta how dangerous and wicked the carle is.

Sir Ferraugh – Sir Ferraugh is a morally questionable knight who thinks he is stealing Florimell from Braggadochio, although actually he only steals false Florimell (an evil sprite who is disguised as her).

Alma – Alma is a courteous lady who hosts Sir Guyon and Arthur at a castle where they have some leisure time and read about the history of Britain. Her castle is under siege by swarms of enemies, led by Malegar.

Philemon – Philemon and his lover Claribell get killed when Furor and Occasion stir up trouble. (This Claribell is different from the one who is married to Sir Bellamoure and is the mother of Pastorella).

Maleffort – Maleffort is a guard who helps Briana try to win the love of Crudor. He resorts to evil tactics, and so Calidore cuts his head off.

Sir Terwin – Sir Terwin is a knight who died after an encounter with the monster Despair.

Sir Trevisan – Sir Trevisan is the knight who warns the Redcross Knight and Una about how the knight Sir Terwin died after encountering Despair.

Philtera – Philtera is a greedy woman who leaves Bracidas for his younger brother Amidas when Amidas suddenly gets a little more land.

Lucy – Lucy is abandoned by her betrothed, Amidas, when Philtera comes for him instead. She tries to kill herself but ends up saved by Amidas's older brother, Bracidas, and marries him instead.

Belgae – Belgae is a poor woman oppressed by the evil tyrant Geryoneo, who kills her children. Some of her surviving children ask Mercilla for help.

Malegar – Malegar is the captain of the swarms of enemies that attack Alma's castle. Arthur defeats Malegar easily, although he's surprisingly durable, surviving even being cut in half.

Fradubio and Fraelissa – Fradubio and Fraelissa are lovers who get turned into trees by the evil sorceress Duessa.

Night – Night is a woman who wears all black. Duessa visits with her while staying at Lucifera's House of Pride, and Night promises her that the Redcross Knight will pay for slaying Sansfoy.

Corceca – Corceca is the blind mother of Abessa who at one point hosts Una and the Lion. She thoughtlessly recites hundreds of prayers a day, which is a criticism of and parody of Catholicism.

Kirkrapine (A Criminal) – Kirkrapine is a criminal who loves Abessa. He is slain by Una's Lion when he tries to sneak in to see Abessa.

Colin Clout – Colin Clout is a shepherd known for his skill playing pipes and who originally appeared in another pastoral poem that Spenser wrote.

Abessa – Abessa is daughter of the blind mother of Corceca who loves the criminal Kirkrapine.

Æsculapius – Æsculapius is a god of medicine who, in mythology, was sent to the underworld for being too good at stopping death. He helps heal Sansjoy's wounds (from battling the Redcross Knight) for Night and Duessa.

Elissa, Perissa, and Medina – Elissa, Perissa, and Medina are three sisters who cause discord between Sansloy, Sir Huddibras, and Sir Guyon, trying to distract Guyon from his service to the Faerie Queene.

Malengin – Malengin is an evil man who steals from travelers and lives underground. Talus finds him and dismembers him as punishment.

Sir Sergis – Sir Sergis is a knight who travels with Arthegall when he's on his way to defeat Grantorto and free Eirena.

Samient – Samient is a damsel who tells Arthegall about the good queen Mercilla.

Argante – Argante is an evil giantess who captures the Squire of Dames.

Ollyphant – Ollyphant is a giant who is Argante's even greedier brother.

Sir Huddibras – Sir Huddibras is an evil knight and an ally of

Sansloy.

Sylvanus – Sylvanus is an old forest god who still enjoys pleasure. He and his fauns and satyrs (half-men, half-goats) save Una from Sansloy in the forest.

Diana – Diana is the virgin huntress goddess of the woods.

Cupid – Cupid is the mischievous god of love and the son of the goddess Venus.

Jupiter – Jupiter is king of the gods and one of the most powerful among them.

Burbon – Burbon is the knight who warns Arthegall about Grantorto's threat to kill Eirena if Arthegall doesn't show up by a certain date.

Atin – Atin is the servant of the fiery knight Pyrochles.

Malvenù – Malvenù is the porter at Lucifera's House of Pride.

Ruddymane – Ruddymane is an orphan saved by Sir Guyon.

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.

VIRTUE, ALLEGORY, AND SYMBOLISM

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is divided into six books, and each book explores a different virtue: holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice, and courtesy. While there are recurring characters who appear in multiple books, the main character is different for each book and is always a knight who represents the book's central virtue. For example, the protagonist of Book I is the Redcross Knight, who embodies the book's theme of holiness. His name comes from the red Christian cross emblem on his shield, which has magic power to protect him. Later in the book, it's revealed that the Redcross Knight is in fact a version of St. George, an English saint famous for slaying a dragon, further confirming the character's holiness.

The obstacles that the Redcross Knight faces on his way to slay the dragon are all full of holy symbolism. For example, he encounters a monster named Error, which is a half-serpent with a knotted-up tail and which prefers to live in the darkness. The monster's name makes the symbolism clear: Error represents errors, with its knotty tail and preference for darkness showing how errors thrive on confusion and ignorance. But while Error is a fearsome monster, the Redcross Knight manages to slay it by chopping off its head, providing a visual representation of how holiness is able to overcome errors. Though the allegory with Error may seem simple, *The Faerie Queene* is dense with these kinds of symbols and often contains shocking imagery, such as when Error's children eat its corpse until they gorge themselves and explode. Echoing the Bible, stories from Greek and Roman mythology, and the work of previous writers like Geoffrey Chaucer, Edmund Spenser structures *The Fairie Queene* so that each section has a clear moral. While it's never a surprise when virtue triumphs over evil, Spenser portrays this conflict in creative ways, using surprising imagery and poetic language to bring everyday moral problems to life for readers.

BRITISH IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* begins with a grand dedication to Queen Elizabeth (the reigning monarch in Britain at the time) in which he writes that all the labor that went into his poem is dedicated to her. The character of the Faerie Queene herself (also called Queen Gloriana) is always virtuous and correct, making her a flattering stand-in for the real-life Queen Elizabeth. Other characters also have clear parallels to Elizabeth, such as the chaste but powerful knight Britomart, who is famously a virgin like Elizabeth and whose very name seems to suggest Britain. Britomart is in fact British, and when she fights on behalf of her homeland, it's no accident that she defeats every evil knight she encounters and astonishes many with her beauty.

While the flattering portrayals of Queen Elizabeth are the most notable examples of British nationalism in Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene* also explores and glorifies British identity in other ways. One of the most noteworthy and unusual cantos in the poem is Book II, Canto X, where the action temporarily pauses while the noble knight Sir Guyon reads a long account of British history. Like *The Faerie Queene* itself, the book that Guyon reads freely mixes real history with mythology, portraying England as an ancient land of giants and monsters that endured numerous reversals of fortune and changes in leadership before finally arriving at its glorious modern form. Spenser invokes Britain's connections to both mythology and an ancient past, not only to praise Queen Elizabeth, but also to help foster a sense of British identity and tradition that endured well beyond Elizabeth's reign.

PROTESTANTISM

Though Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* draws influences from a variety of different religious traditions—including the mythology of ancient Greece and Rome—it is also an unapologetic defense of Anglican Protestantism. Many of the book's themes, like justice or friendship, are not necessarily religious, and others like holiness or chastity play a role in many different religions. Nevertheless, a close look at the events and characters in *The Faerie Queene* reveals that many of the villains in the story are

specifically coded to represent real-world opponents to Protestantism.

On the one hand, there are the external threats to Protestantism, often referred to in the poem as "paynim" (pagans) or Saracen. Book I, for example, has the evil trio of Sansfoy, Sansloy, and Sansjoy who oppose the Redcross Knight and try to steal away his lady Una. Book II has Pyrochles and Cymochles, the pagan knights who quarrel with the noble Sir Guyon, attempting to steal his armor while he's injured and refusing to change their ways even after being granted second chances. These characters are often explicitly or implicitly rendered as Muslim and sometimes originally hail from Persia, recalling battles between Christianity and Islam during the Crusades as well as in Spain in the fifteenth century. These characters are often irredeemably evil, with personalities that are greedy, violent, and unrepentant.

The other big threat to Protestantism explored in *The Faerie Queene* is internal: Catholicism. At the time of the poem's publication, England was in a period of fierce religious conflict, with the Protestant Queen Elizabeth having recently dethroned and beheaded the Catholic Queen Mary. This conflict is re-enacted in Book V, when the merciful Queen Mercilla makes the difficult decision to punish Duessa, a false sorceress who led men astray by disguising herself as beautiful. The tricky Duessa could reflect the contemporary Protestant belief that while Catholic practices might appear outwardly beautiful, they were inwardly false and deceptive. While Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* deals with big, universal themes about virtue, its specific depictions of other religions often reveal a preference for Protestant doctrine and, in doing so, sometimes reflect anti-Catholic and other common biases of the time.

DECEPTION AND LIES

Throughout Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, evil characters disguise their identities and tell lies in order to trick heroic characters into doing things they wouldn't otherwise do. Archimago in Book I is one of the earliest examples of this type of trickster character, using magic and some mischievous sprites in order to trick the Redcross Knight into believing that his chaste lady Una has been unfaithful to him. Even more extreme is the Blatant Beast that Sir Calidore pursues in Book VI. It is slander personified: a doglike monster with many tongues, some human and others animal, in order to represent the many ways that slander ruins the reputations of knights and ladies with its lies. Though Calidore tames the beast for a while, the poem ends with the beast let loose again, showing the enduring and uncontainable power of deception.

According to Spenser, the most dangerous thing about deception is that it can make an evil thing appear like a good one—or even better than a good one. This is most humorously illustrated with the case of false Florimell in Book IIII, where the fair maiden Florimell competes in a beauty contest against a replica of herself (made from snow for skin, lamps for eyes, and gold wire for hair) that is controlled by an evil sprite. The episode shows how deception can be seductive—but it also shows how the allure of deception is temporary, since false Florimell is eventually outed as a fake, just like previous trickster characters like Archimago and Duessa get their comeuppance. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser portrays how the glamor of lies and deception can lead even virtuous characters astray, but he also shows how true virtue and honesty win out in the end.

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Throughout Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, there are two types of relationships that occur again and again. One is love (typically between a knight and a lady) and the other is friendship (often between equally matched knights who share common goals, or between knights and squires). In Spenser's epic poem, characters' morality often comes through most clearly in their relationships with others, meaning that heroic characters are kind and courteous in their relationships while villainous characters are selfish and uncaring.

One of the most noteworthy love stories in *The Fairy Queene* is the romance between Britomart and Arthegall. Though their courtship represents an ideal version of love, this doesn't mean there aren't obstacles along the way. First, Britomart searches for a long time for Arthegall, enduring heartsickness and maintaining her chastity, all in the hopes of one day meeting her destined husband. After meeting, Britomart and Arthegall don't immediately fall in love—due to mistaken identity, the two end up actually fighting each other in battle. Even when Britomart and Arthegall do confess their love, they can't be together immediately because Arthegall is called off to complete his knightly duties. Though there are fairytale elements to the love between Britomart and Arthegall, what's even more noteworthy is their patience and endurance for overcoming obstacles.

In a similar vein, many of the noble knights that meet in *The Faerie Queene* also form enduring friendships that are built on sacrifice and endurance. Arthur appears as a character in several books, helping the other knights on their quests, but his most notable relationship is with his squire Timias. Timias and Arthur feel affection for each other, but they also feel a sense of duty. When Timias fails in his squirely duty by disappointing the fair huntress Belphoebe, he is too ashamed to see Arthur again until he first performs proper penance to Belphoebe. In the poem, knights operate according to a code, and while knights who follow this code form friendships based on shared duty, knights who disregard the code often end up on their own, at

least until they serve their punishment. By comparing and contrasting examples of love and friendship in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser shows how healthy relationships can be based on mutual duty and sacrifice, while superficial relationships can be easily torn apart by greed and selfishness.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* has a complicated relationship with women. On the one hand, the poem reflects biases against women that were prevalent when it was written. Under *coverture*, a legal practice that was common in England in the 1500s and for centuries afterwards, women had no legal status, being "covered" by their husbands, and so they couldn't own land in most cases unless they were widowed. The Amazon queen Radigund is an example in the poem of a woman who tries to place herself above men, and rather than celebrating her, Spenser portrays her as cruel, egotistical, and ultimately deserving of being beheaded, suggesting that Radigund was wrong to challenge women's place in the status quo. Nevertheless, this situation is complicated by the fact that *The Faerie Queene* is dedicated to a woman (the real-life Queen Elizabeth) and the fact that one of the strongest, most heroic characters in the entire story is the lady knight Britomart, who represents the nation of Britain itself in the poem.

Despite Britomart's immense physical strength, she shares one thing in common with the many honorable but helpless damsels that populate the poem—she is always chaste and faithful, unlike the evil women in the story who are lusty and tricky (traits that some of the evil men share as well). Though Britomart bests her future husband Arthegall in battle, she respects his authority and doesn't challenge him when he leaves her to go off on his own to fulfill his duties to the Faerie Queene. Britomart's virgin status seems to have been inspired in part by Queen Elizabeth, whose own unmarried state was controversial at the time, but which Spenser portrays as a positive aspect of Britomart. Like Elizabeth, Britomart is an exception among women, perhaps in part because her knight's armor allows her to look like a man. *The Faerie Queene* features several powerful and virtuous women (in addition to Britomart, there's the righteous queen Mercilla and of course the Faerie Queene herself), but rather than challenging the status quo, these women uphold it, deferring to men and stopping women like Radigund or Duessa who would disrupt the social order. Such portrayals of exceptional women could have helped lessen the fears of contemporary readers who worried about Queen Elizabeth's unusual status as an unmarried woman on the throne.

SYMBOLS

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

SHIELDS

In *The Faerie Queene*, shields are more than just a piece of combat equipment: they represent a knight's identity. Perhaps the most famous shield in the book is the one that belongs to the Redcross Knight and gives him his name. The shield has a red emblem on it in the shape of a Christian cross, and it is enchanted to protect the Redcross Knight from danger. Symbolically, this suggests that Redcross's faith is what protects him from danger—which is appropriate since he is the character who embodies the virtue of holiness. In general, shields seem to be associated with heroic characters—Arthegall also has a recognizable shield that helps him defeat the villain Grantorto when his ax gets stuck in the shield. This could reflect how good knights, like shields, are protectors. Nevertheless, a few evil characters do have prominent shields, perhaps most notably Pyrochles, whose shield reads "Burnt Do I Burn." These evil characters with shields don't necessarily contradict the positive image of shields—they simply show how sometimes evil knights adopt characteristics of good knights, even if they can only offer a pale imitation.

FLORIMELL'S GOLD BELT

The gold belt of Florimell (also sometimes called a girdle) symbolizes chastity and, in particular, how true chastity is worth as much as gold—if not more. Florimell is one of the most chaste and beautiful women in the story. Her belt, which makes its wearer worthy of chaste love and which originally belonged to Venus, first becomes significant when a beast attacks Florimell and the belt gets left behind, leaving some characters like Sir Satyrane to fear that Florimell has died. Later, the gold belt plays a key role in a tournament of knights, when a beauty contest among the ladies leads to the belt being given as a prize to a false version of Florimell created by a hag. The belt rejects its new wearer, slipping off, and many other women at the tournament try to wear the belt, only to find it also slipping off of them, too. This suggests that chastity—particularly of the kind Florimell demonstrates—is rare among women and should be valued. (Notably, the chaste Amoretta is able to wear Florimell's belt, suggesting that she is similarly worthy of chaste love.) The return of the gold belt back to the real Florimell in Book V suggests that false women and false chastity won't hold up to scrutiny, whereas patience and endurance like Florimell's will be rewarded.

FAERIE COURT

Faerie Court symbolizes the virtuous ideal for which a good knight should strive. While Faerie Court is never directly depicted in *The Faerie Queene*, it is frequently referenced as an ideal for how a proper knight should act. While many of the heroes in the epic poem face moments of weakness or moments when they are tempted or misled, the Faerie Queene herself seems to be infallible. Serving the Faerie Queen is such an important duty that the Redcross Knight places service to her above his devotion to his lady Una, and similarly, Arthegall temporarily leaves Britomart in order to help carry out a request for the queen. While Faerie Court can be interpreted as a stand-in for the court of real-life Queen Elizabeth, it arguably takes on even greater significance, embodying the concept of duty itself and even taking on a religious dimension. The service that the various knights in the story render to their Faerie Queene resembles the duty and sacrifice that a good Protestant Christian would render to God. Faerie Court exists in the story as a distant idea of perfection, just as heaven is a distant idea of perfection in Christianity, and this is why service to the Faerie Court is the highest priority for many knights.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *The Faerie Queene* published in 1979.

Book I: Proem Quotes

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
As time her taught in lowly Shepheards weeds,
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,
And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 39

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is from the proem (introductory part) of the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, and it introduces the narrator of the poem, who is very much a character of his own. The narrator starts this long epic poem by calling on the help of his Muse. Muses are ancient Greek and Roman goddesses of the arts and sciences, and many ancient epic poems (like Homer's *Odyssey* or Vergil's *Aeneid*) also started with the narrator asking the Muses for help telling the story. Both the plots and the characters of *The Faerie Queene* draw inspiration from classical epic poetry, and so Spenser references the style of these poems as well.

One of the first things that Spenser's early readers would have noticed about his poetic style was that it was very archaic, using words and spellings that were more common hundreds of years ago. Today, it's possible to see these archaic touches by comparing the style of *The Faerie Queene* to the writing of William Shakespeare, who wrote around the same time as Spenser but whose English looks a little closer to today's version of the language. This archaic style reflects the nostalgic and sometimes conservative themes of the poem, which often involve preserving a status quo.

Book I: Canto I Quotes

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
Y clad in mightie armes and silver shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,
The cruel markes of many a bloudy fielde;

[...]

But on his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore,
The dear remembrance of his dying Lord,
For whose weete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead as living ever him ador'd:
Upon his shield the like was also scor'd

Related Characters: Redcross Knight

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

This passage introduces The Redcross Knight, the protagonist of the first book of the poem and one of the overall most important characters in it. Many characters in the poem get only brief descriptions of their physical appearances that cover one or two important features, so the Redcross Knight's several lines of description actually make him one of the most intricately described heroes in the story.

The "dints" on the Redcross Knight's armor suggest that he is no new knight, but rather a veteran who has been through plenty of battles before. Even great knights in the poem get wounded, and what separates them from weaker knights is how they keep fighting. The most significant part of the

Redcross Knight—which gives him his name—is the bright red crucifix insignia that he wears on his clothes and on his shield. This establishes that the Redcross Knight is a Christian warrior (and as later parts of the poem will establish, specifically an Anglican Protestant warrior). Christianity is an essential part of *The Faerie Queene*, informing the whole poem's morality, even though Spenser also takes heavy influence from non-Christian religions, particularly the religions of ancient Greece, Rome, and sometimes Egypt.

Book I: Canto IV Quotes

Young knight, what ever that does armes professe,
And through long labours huntest after fame,
Beware of fraud, beware of ficklenesse,
In choice, and change of thy deare loved Dame

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), Redcross Knight, Duessa, Una

Related Themes:

Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

This quote by the narrator of the poem comes at the beginning of Book I, Canto IV and poses some advice directly to a potential reader. Many cantos begin with commentary from the narrator, sometimes framed as advice to a reader, other times just presented as general musings. Often, these commentaries deal with the virtue or vice that is most important to the action of the canto. Here, for example, the narrator warns of "fraud" and "ficklenesse."

While the narrator's advice is general, it could also be interpreted specifically as a warning to the Redcross Knight to beware the tricky sorceress Duessa and trust instead the faithful Una. The poem often works on both a general and specific level at the same time, with the individual actions of the characters meant to represent broader moral issues that could apply to almost anyone. This specific commentary by the narrator deals with the concept of authenticity, particularly for women, and this is a subject that will come up again and again in the poem. The poem is full of women like Duessa who appear sweet on the surface but only want to lead men to their dooms. Women in the poem can save men and represent the highest form of virtue, but this seeming admiration for women is mixed with the constant anxiety that women who appear virtuous might not be what they seem.

Book I: Canto IX Quotes

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshly wight,
Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,
Ne divelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.

Related Characters: Una (speaker), Redcross Knight, Despair

Related Themes:

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Una to the Redcross Knight when he is confronting Despair, one of the most significant episodes in the first book of the poem. Fittingly enough, the Redcross Knight's encounter with the monster Despair is an allegory for him confronting his own despair and facing up to all the ways he has potentially sinned by abandoning his lady, Una. Despair is a monster who kills knights by providing them the means to commit suicide, and the Redcross Knight seems to be on the verge of killing himself when Una intervenes at the last minute.

The scene of the Redcross Knight confronting Despair is powerful because some of Despair's arguments do make sense and sound logical on the surface. While Despair tells a slanted version of events, he nevertheless causes the Redcross Knight to feel regret by reminding him of real actions he took in the past. Up until this point in the poem, Una has been a largely passive character who is essentially helpless without someone like the Redcross Knight to protect her. Here, however, she illustrates that her relationship with the Redcross Knight is not always a one-way partnership with him as protector—her own virtue helps fortify him, and at crucial moments, it can even help save him.

Book I: Canto XII Quotes

Now strike your sailes ye jolly Mariners,
For we come unto a quiet rode,
Where we must land some of our passengers,
And light this wearie vessel of her lode.

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), Redcross Knight, Una

Related Themes:

Page Number: 202

Explanation and Analysis

This quote by the narrator ends the last canto of the first book of *The Faerie Queene* and helps establish how the different books of the poem will have an episodic structure. The nautical metaphor, particularly the part about how it's time to "land some of our passengers," suggests that the poem itself is a long journey, and that "passengers" (i.e., the characters in the story) will be coming and going at different parts of the narrative. Although this passage implies that the story of the Redcross Knight and Una has reached its end, in fact the Redcross Knight will show up quite a few more times in the story, even after getting his seeming happily-ever-after ending. It is true, however, that the Redcross Knight will never be the protagonist again (he mostly plays a support role to new protagonists), and so in that sense, this canto is a sort of goodbye to him.

Book II: Canto I Quotes

His carriage was full comely and upright,
His countenance demure and temperate,
But yet so sterne and terrible in sight,
That cheard his friends, and did his foes amate:
He was an Elfin borne of noble state
[...]

Him als accopanyd upon the way
A comely Palmer, clad in blacke attire,
Of ripest years, and haries all hoarie gray

Related Characters: Gloriana (The Faerie Queene), Sir Guyon, Acrasia, The Palmer

Related Themes:

Page Number: 206

Explanation and Analysis

This passage introduces the new protagonist of Book II of *The Fairie Queene*, whose name is Sir Guyon. While the Redcross Knight was the knight of holiness, Sir Guyon is the knight of temperance. In many ways, Sir Guyon resembles his predecessor the Redcross Knight. They are both powerful, noble knights who are half-elf and who have pledged undying allegiance to Gloriana, the Faerie Queene. It might seem logical to wonder, then, why Redcross was replaced with a new knight at all.

To begin with, the introduction of Sir Guyon provides a new opportunity to tell a story of moral growth—Redcross has already reached a sort of enlightenment, and so now it's Guyon's turn to go on a new journey of realizing his potential as a knight. Moreover, the new protagonist provides an opportunity to center the poem on a new virtue. As the knight of temperance, Guyon encounters helpful characters along the way who help him grow in this virtue (most notably the Palmer, who acts as Guyon's more experienced guide, not just for navigation but spiritually as well). He also encounters villainous characters, like the pleasure-seeking witch Acrasia, who oppose temperance in all its forms.

Book II: Canto IV Quotes

And round the wreath, this word was writ,
Burnt I do burne. Right well beseemed it,
To be the shield of some redoubted knight

Related Characters: Redcross Knight, Sir Guyon, Pyrochles, Atin, The Palmer

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 254

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes the shield of the evil knight Pyrochles (which is carried by his servant Atin). The shield is one of a knight's most important objects, and just as the Redcross Knight's shield featured a cross to signify his holy status, the shield of Pyrochles features a motto, "Burnt I do burne," that exemplifies his greatest flaw. While Pyrochles has some of the elements of a good knight, such as strength and zeal, he takes things too far—both his name and his shield suggest a fiery personality, which leads him to destruction rather than justice. Pyrochles attacks first and asks questions later, showing the complete opposite of the careful thinking and temperance embodied by Sir Guyon. Pyrochles lacks a figure like the Palmer to help him grow spiritually, and so he continues to stray further and further. While the heroes of the poem like Sir Guyon provide a model of good, virtuous behavior, the villains are just as important, providing role models for what *not* to do.

Book II: Canto VIII Quotes

There the good *Guyon* he found slumbring fast
In senseless dream; which sight at first him sore aghast.

Beside his head there sate a faire young man,
Of woundrous beautie, and of freshest years.

Related Characters: Sir Guyon, Mammon, The Palmer

Related Themes:

Page Number: 298

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes a moment when the Palmer finally sees Sir Guyon again after a couple cantos of being separated. The scene is surprising because the beautiful young man sitting next to the sleeping Sir Guyon is a character who has never been seen before, and he quickly disappears. The Palmer realizes that the young man was an angel who was protecting Sir Guyon.

During the early parts of Book II, the Palmer himself was the protector of Sir Guyon, providing him spiritual guidance and, in particular, advising him to remain temperate at times when he risked becoming too passionate. When Sir Guyon leaves the Palmer behind to take a boat ride, this represents a temporary straying from the path and a rejection of temperance. Yet even without the Palmer's guidance, Sir Guyon manages to ultimately resist temptation, turning down the massive wealth offered to him by Mammon in the underworld. While it seems that Sir Guyon resists temptation all on his own, this scene reveals that the whole time he had an angel watching over him, symbolizing how God provides for virtuous people when they're in need. The return of the Palmer means the angel is no longer needed, and so the Palmer can return to playing the guiding role that the angel played in his absence.

Book II: Canto X Quotes

After him *Uther*, which *Pendragon* hight,
Succeeding There abruptly did end

Related Characters: Arthur , Sir Guyon, Alma

Related Themes:

Page Number: 345

Explanation and Analysis

This section comes at the end of a long passage that paraphrases an account of British history that Arthur reads in the castle of Alma. While it might seem like a strange diversion to pause the action of the poem for a character to spend a whole canto reading a book, in many ways Canto X is one of the most important cantos of the whole poem, since British history (both real and mythological) is one of the central themes of *The Faerie Queene*.

The character of Arthur in the poem is a young version of the mythological King Arthur, perhaps the greatest fictional king in British history. King Arthur is the son of Uther Pendragon, and so the reason that Arthur's book of British history stops at Uther is because he himself is going to be the next chapter of history. The inclusion of such an iconic British character in the poem ties into the larger theme of British identity in *The Faerie Queene*. Although Arthur comes from a time before Protestantism even existed, Spenser uses him to suggest that British history is one long epic that logically reaches its current state with the rule of the real-life Queen Elizabeth.

Book II: Canto XII Quotes

Said *Guyon*, See the mind of beastly man,
That hath so soone forgot the excellence
Of his creation, when he life began,
That now he chooseth, with vile difference
To be a beast, and lack intelligence

Related Characters: Sir Guyon (speaker), Acrasia, The Palmer

Related Themes:

Page Number: 382

Explanation and Analysis

This passage, spoken by Sir Guyon, is one of the last images described in Book II of the poem. Having just destroyed the pleasure-seeking witch Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, Sir Guyon and the Palmer head back to leave her island. Along the way, the Palmer sees a man who was turned into a wild beast by Acrasia's enchantments, and so he restores the man to a state of humanity. But even after being made human again, the man continues to act like a wild beast. As Sir Guyon concludes, this man was not just an innocent victim of Acrasia, but in fact someone who willingly chose to live a debased life and to reject higher virtues in favor of low pleasures. This passage represents sin as something crude and less-than-human—more suitable to mindless beasts. Humans who choose to wallow in sin, according to the poem, are little better than wild animals. Ultimately, this passage suggests that despite Sir Guyon's triumph over Acrasia, individuals still have to make their own choice to live virtuous lives, and those who make the wrong choices are in danger of wasting their lives.

Book III: Proem Quotes

It falls me here to write of Chastity
That fairest virtue, farre above the rest;
For which what needs me fetch from Faery
Forreine ensamples, it to have exprest?
Sith it is shrined in my Soveraines brest

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), Britomart

Related Themes:

Page Number: 383

Explanation and Analysis

This quote from the proem to Book III finds the narrator musing on the concept of chastity. While the entire poem is filled with references to Queen Elizabeth and characters that are specifically intended to represent (and often flatter) her, this is one of the few cases of a direct mention of her (referred to here as "my Soveraine"). In case there was ever any doubt, this passage confirms that *The Faerie Queene*'s obsession with chastity has a direct link to Queen Elizabeth, a monarch whose famously unmarried status was controversial during her reign. Because some British citizens thought Queen Elizabeth's lack of a husband was a detriment to her ability to reign, Spenser tries to provide a counter-argument by proposing that chastity is one of the greatest virtues of all. Britomart is one of the chaste characters in the poem as well as one of the most powerful, providing an interesting counterpoint to the many other virtuous but passive female characters in the story. While the poem generally follows sexist ideas that women should be subservient to men, there are complicated exceptions to this rule that try to grapple with how Queen Elizabeth was an exception in a mostly patriarchal society.

Book III: Canto III Quotes

The man whom Heavens have ordaynd to bee
The spouse of *Britomart*, is *Arthegall*:
He wonneth in the land of Fayeree

Related Characters: Merlin (speaker), Arthegall, Britomart, Glauce

Related Themes:

Page Number: 422

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, spoken by the famous wizard Merlin, describes to Britomart his vision about her future husband, Arthegall. This passage is part of a flashback to before Britomart became a knight and traveled to faerie land. As her name suggests, Britomart is from Britain, and Spenser ties her to British history and mythology by invoking Merlin (who, according to legend, also helped King Arthur). The language in the passage about how heaven has "ordaynd" Britomart's future helps establish that she is a consequential character (as well as suggesting that her journey will have a religious tone to it).

Britomart is an unusual character because she is one of the strongest knights in the story—stronger even than most male knights, in a story where women typically play passive roles. Nevertheless, she is not totally independent, and, in fact, arguably she is still subservient to a man, since so much of her quest is dedicated to finding and serving her eventual husband Arthegall.

Book III: Canto IV Quotes

Who through foresight of his eternall skill,
Bad her from womankind to keepe him well:
For of a woman he should have much ill,
A virgin strange and stout him should dismay, or kill.

Related Characters: Britomart, Florimell, Marinell, Proteus, Cymoent

Related Themes:

Page Number: 438

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes a prophecy that Proteus made about Marinell. Basically, Proteus predicted that the nymph Cymoent should make sure that her son, a knight named Marinell, avoided all contact with women because a virgin woman will seriously hurt or even kill him. Marinell follows this prophecy dutifully, but he is a rash knight, and when he sees Britomart enter his territory in full armor, he assumes she's a man and rides forth to attack her. Britomart strikes back and does indeed wound Marinell severely, fulfilling the prophecy.

Like many ancient prophecies, what's interesting about Proteus's prediction is not simply that it comes true, but that it gets fulfilled in such an unusual way. Britomart is in fact a virgin woman, though she certainly wasn't the sort of woman that Cymoent thought was going to hurt her son. With the prophecy fulfilled, Marinell eventually does end up finding happiness with the virgin woman Florimell, once

again upending expectations. With this prophecy, Spenser shows a clear mastery of old storytelling traditions, putting them to his own use in his poetry.

Book III: Canto VIII Quotes

Now when the Beast, which by her wicked art
Late forth she sent, she backe returning spyde,
Tyde with her broken girdle, it a part
Of her rich spoyles, whom he had earst destroyd,
She weend, and woundrous gladnesse to her hart applyde.

Related Characters: Florimell, Sir Satyrane, Marinell, Venus

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 492

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes the moment after a jealous hag sends a hyena-like beast out to get Florimell. It returns with her golden girdle (also called a *belt* or a *ribbon* at various times), leading the hag to believe Florimell is dead. While this scene might not seem significant to the plot on its own, it marks one of the first appearances of Florimell's gold belt, a symbol that will show up again and again in the coming cantos.

Florimell's belt, which was originally owned by Venus and helps its owner engage in chaste love, represents her as a whole, as well as symbolizing the virtues she embodies. Chief among these virtues is chastity: a belt is an item of clothing that can help people dress more modestly, and so the belt is a visible sign of the chaste and innocent way that Florimell carries herself. Its gold color represents Florimell's "rich spoyles"—how chastity has a value that's worth as much as gold.

Book III: Canto XII Quotes

But Britomart uprearing her from ground,
Said, Gentle Dame, reward enough I weene
For many labours more, then I have found,
This, that in safety now I have you seen,
And meane of your deliverance have beene

Related Characters: Britomart (speaker), Sir Scudamore, Amoretta (Amoret)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 560

Explanation and Analysis

This quote from near the end of Book III is part of a conversation between Britomart and Amoretta. Just before this quote, Amoretta falls on her knees before Britomart and asks if there's anything she can possibly do for Britomart to thank her for saving her. Britomart gives the reply that any good knight would give: that being able to help people is a reward in itself. Britomart's answer shows that, while she is an unconventional knight in many ways, particularly because of her gender, she nevertheless follows the code of chivalry just as well as any other knight. The evil knights in the story often rob people, extort them, or otherwise try to profit off of random strangers they come across on the road. On the other hand, good knights like Britomart work for the benefit of all humanity. They think in broader terms, about how good deeds can lead to heaven, while evil knights greedily focus on actions that provide immediate gratification.

Book IV: Canto I Quotes

Of lovers sad calamities of old,
Full many piteous stories doe remaine,
But none more piteous ever was ytold,
Then that of *Amorets* hart-binding chaine,
And this of *Florimels* unworthie paine

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), Britomart, Sir Scudamore, Florimell, Amoretta (Amoret), Marinell

Related Themes:

Page Number: 383

Explanation and Analysis

This passage from near the beginning of Book IIII mentions the characters of Amoretta (also sometimes called Amoret) and Florimell, two fair maidens who play an important role in the upcoming cantos. Book IIII is unusual because while its subtitle suggests that it will be about the friendship of Cambell and Triamond, in fact those characters play a comparatively small role in the book. One of the major plots of the book involves the long journey to reunite Amoretta (recently saved by Britomart) with her lover Scudamore. A different but similar plot involves reuniting Florimell with her lover Marinell, as well as a fake duplicate version of

Florimell (really a sprite in disguise) who inspires fickle knights to fight for possession of her. Although Book IIII is less singularly focused on its virtue of friendship than the other books focus on their virtues, Book IIII's wide cast of characters from previous parts of the poem helps advance the plot and expand on the poem's epic scope.

Book IV: Canto II Quotes

Though now their acts be no where to be found
As that renowned Poet them compyled,
With warlike numbers and Heroicke sound,
Dan *Chaucer* well of English undefiled,
On Fames eternall beadroll worthie to be fyled.

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond, Cambell, Canacee, Cambina

Related Themes:

Page Number: 587

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes the two characters Cambell and Triamond, who originally appeared in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and who reappear in different versions in *The Faerie Queene*. While classical Greek and Roman epic poems are one of the main influences on Spenser's writing, one of the other big influences was medieval writing, particularly Chaucer's. At the time Spenser wrote, Chaucer had been dead for almost 200 years and was well-regarded. Spenser presents the adventures of Cambell and Triamond as if they are real stories that happened in the past and which Chaucer simply didn't have the time to record. When Spenser wrote *The Faerie Queene*, modern English was still relatively young, particularly as a literary language, and so referencing an esteemed author like Chaucer was a way for Spenser to lend his own work more legitimacy. Like Spenser, Chaucer also died before completing his most famous work: both *Canterbury Tales* and *The Faerie Queene* were originally intended to be longer.

Book IV: Canto IV Quotes

Then all with one consent did yield the prize
To Triamond and Cambell as the best.
But Triamond to Cambell it relest.
And Cambell it to Triamond transferd;
Each labouring t'advance the others gest,
And make his praise before his owne preferd:

Related Characters: Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond, Cambell

Related Themes:

Page Number: 616

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes the end of a day's fighting in a tournament of knights when Triamond and Cambell heroically fought to help each other on the battlefield. Each knight refuses the highest prize, believing that his friend deserves it more. Triamond and Cambell have quite a history with each other—Cambell killed two of Triamond's brothers in a tournament (although their souls flew into Triamond afterwards). Triamond himself fought Cambell to a standstill, and so things ended with Triamond marrying Cambell's sister and Cambell marrying Triamond's sister.

The actions of Triamond and Cambell in the tournament present a knightly ideal of friendship. While achieving glory and maintaining a good reputation were important knightly goals, there was also a sense of camaraderie that encouraged cooperation instead of competition—at least among virtuous knights. Triamond and Cambell each exhibit exceptional selflessness, making them good examples of chivalry in action.

Book IV: Canto V Quotes

Then was that golden belt by doome of all
Graunted to her, as to the fairest Dame.
Which being brought, about her middle small
They thought to gird, as best it her became;
But by no meanes they could it thereto frame.

Related Characters: Florimell

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 624

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes the results of a beauty contest that happens after a tournament of knights. The people in attendance agree that the fairest maiden among all of them is "Florimell," not realizing that the Florimell they see is actually a sprite in disguise. The ruse is revealed, however, when fake Florimell tries to wear the real Florimell's golden belt and it keeps falling off. Later other women also try to

wear the belt and find that it doesn't fit them, either. It seems that, while Florimell's belt gives its wearer the power of chaste love, it only allows wearers that are already chaste.

This part of the story illustrates the dangers of trusting outward appearances. The false Florimell is so appealing that it wins a contest over more deserving, real women. Moreover, many real women who appeared virtuous on the outside were revealed as frauds when they tried to wear the belt. While the belt is an outward symbol of Florimell's chastity, the moral here is that sometimes real value is what's on the inside.

Book IV: Canto XII Quotes

Right so himself did Marinell upreare,
When he in place his dearst love did spy;
And though his limbs could not his bodie beare,
Ne former strength return so suddenly,
Yet chearefull signes he shewed outwardly.

Related Characters: Britomart, Florimell, Marinell, Proteus

Related Themes:

Page Number: 721

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes how Marinell perks up after finally being reunited with his love Florimell. Both of the two lovers have suffered a lot in the previous few cantos. Marinell was gravely wounded by Britomart, then had a difficult time recovering because he was so lovesick for Florimell. Florimell, meanwhile, was chased by a monster and a lecherous fisherman, only to be "rescued" by Proteus, who soon locked her in his dungeon. The reunion of Marinell and Florimell shows how people who endure hardship can be rewarded in the end for their patience. The passage also continues a running theme in the poem of lovesickness acting like a physical disease. Marinell has been pining for Marinell so long that his whole body is weak and even a reunion isn't enough to get him back to full health. This description of physical wasting away helps convey the intensity of Marinell's love.

Book V: Canto I Quotes

And such was he, of whome I have to tell,
The Champion of true Justice Artegall.
Whom (as ye lately mote remember well)
An hard adventure, which did then befall,
Into redoubted perill forth did call.

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), Gloriana (The Faerie Queene), Arthegall, Britomart

Related Themes:

Page Number: 727

Explanation and Analysis

This quote from near the beginning of Book V reintroduces the character of Arthegall, who appeared in previous cantos but who is elevated to the status of main character in Book V. Just as previous books focused on a particular virtue, Book V is all about justice. While the knights in the previous books all fought well, Arthegall is one of the most violent knights in the story, reflecting how this poem's version of justice often demands harsh consequences. Nevertheless, Arthegall also has moments where he shows more restrained judgment and even mercy, suggesting that justice requires a range of different interpretations to suit the specific circumstances.

Notably, the events of Book V take place after Arthegall has already pledged himself to his love Britomart. While serving his lady is one of the noblest things a knight can do, perhaps a knight's highest purpose is to fulfill his duties. In this case, Arthegall's duty to serve Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, overshadows his commitment to Britomart, and so he rides forth to fulfill this duty. This difficult decision is in keeping with the many other difficult decisions about morality that Arthegall makes in this book.

Book V: Canto IV Quotes

For eqaull right in equall things doth stand,
For what the mighty Sea hath once possest,
And plucked quite from all possessors hand,
Whether by rage of waves, that never rest,
Or else by wracke, that wretches hath distrest,
He may dispose by his imperial might.

Related Characters: Arthegall (speaker), Bracidas, Amidas, Philtera, Lucy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 764

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, spoken by Arthegall, is his judgment regarding a land dispute that has divided the brothers Bracidas and Amidas. The two brothers each inherited an island to themselves. The islands started out the same size, but over time, part of Bracidas's island drifted on the sea over to Amidas's island. This caused Bracidas's fickle fiancée, Philtera, to leave him. But a twist comes when Amidas's old fiancée Lucy tries to kill herself in the sea and ends up riding on a treasure chest to Bracidas's island. Both brothers try to lay claim to the treasure chest.

Arthegall's answer to this complicated question reveals his own stance on justice. He says that Amidas can keep the land that drifted over to his island, but this means that Bracidas can keep the treasure chest. His answer respects the will of the sea, perhaps symbolizing a respect for nature and how it can be a tool for the mysterious workings of God.

Book V: Canto VII Quotes

❝ Where being layd, the wrothfull Britonesse
Stayd not, till she came to her selfe againe,
But in revenge both of her loves distresse,
And her late vile reproach, though vaunted vaine,
And also of her wound, which sore did paine,
She with one stroke both head and helmet cleft.

Related Characters: Arthegall, Britomart, Radigund

Related Themes:

Page Number: 807

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes a climactic moment when Britomart comes to rescue Arthegall from the clutches of a proud Amazon warrior named Radigund. Radigund has defeated Arthegall in battle and humbled him by locking him in a dungeon and forcing him to complete jobs while wearing women's clothes. In the poem, Radigund represents a bad woman who is too rebellious. She wages war against good knights because one scorned her.

Britomart, on the other hand, is the epitome of a good knight. Even though she is a woman, she respects the code of chivalry. She is chaste and devoted to one lover, whereas Radigund keeps raging over a man who turned her down. While both Britomart and Radigund are exceptionally skilled warriors, particularly compared to other women in the poem, the difference between them is that Britomart is a loyal knight who upholds the chivalry status quo, while Radigund is a rebel who tries to tear chivalry down. Britomart's defeat of Radigund is, a little paradoxically, an argument for the idea that women should be subservient to men. Although Britomart saves Arthegall, she doesn't try to change the social order, whereas Radigund and her Amazon warriors constantly rebel against the code of chivalry.

Book V: Canto X Quotes

❝ When they had seene and heard her doome a rights
Against Duessa, damned by them all;
But by her tempred without griefe or gall,
Till strong constraint did her thereto enforce.

Related Characters: Arthegall, Duessa, Mercilla

Related Themes:

Page Number: 838

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes a scene in the court of the good queen Mercilla. The trickster Duessa, who has appeared several times in previous books, has finally been brought forth for a trial. Although Mercilla is a merciful queen who feels pity for Duessa, the implication seems to be that ultimately Duessa is executed. This scene can be interpreted as a parallel to the judgment and execution of Mary, Queen of Scots by Queen Elizabeth, a controversial event that happened not too long before Spenser wrote his poem. Though Spenser was a Protestant who approved of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth taking the throne from Mary, he knew that some considered her actions against the former queen to be harsh. In this scene, the Elizabeth stand-in, Mercilla, is deliberately depicted as being extremely merciful and reluctant to take action against the deceptive Duessa. By emphasizing the evilness of Duessa and the kindness of Mercilla, Spenser helps advance the argument that Elizabeth herself was justified in executing Mary.

Book V: Canto XII Quotes

❝ But ere he could reform it thoroughly,
He through occasion called was away,
To Faerie Court, that of necessity
His course of Justice he was forst to stay,
And Talus to revoke from the right way

Related Characters: Arthegall, Talus, Grantorto, Eirena

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 870

Explanation and Analysis

This quote wraps up the plot at the end of Book V. After saving Eirena from the tyrant Grantorto and returning her to her rightful place on the throne, Arthegall spends some time in her kingdom, doing what he can to try to bring about justice. But despite his best efforts, he is called back by Gloriana to Faerie Court before he can bring about meaningful reforms in Eirena's kingdom. This passage seems to be an acknowledgment that the reality of creating justice can be complicated and that Arthegall's grand judgments and displays of justice are only a small part of bringing justice to a full kingdom.

This passage also once again stresses Arthegall's devotion to serving the Faerie Queene above all else. Despite his good work in fulfilling the queen's wishes, he still remains in her service for a period of time. This reflects the importance of duty in the poem, both as an aspect of chivalry and perhaps also in a larger religious sense, to emphasize the responsibilities of a Christian to God.

Book VI: Canto I Quotes

But mongst them all was none more courteous Knight,
Then Calidore, beloved over all,
in whom it seemes that gentlenesse of spright
And manners mylde were planted naturall

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), Calidore, Sir Turpine

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 878

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, from near the beginning of the sixth and final book of *The Faerie Queene*, introduces the character of Sir Calidore, a knight who is defined by his courtesy. Courtesy was an important part of chivalry, and it involved more than simply good manners. Hospitality and, in particular, the willingness to do good deeds for strangers were both important parts of courtesy, and Sir Calidore embodies all these traits. The villains in Book VI, like Sir Turpine, are defined not just by the evil things they do but also by the good things they refuse to do. Being a good knight involved more than just passively avoiding evil—it involved going out of your way to help people. Sir Calidore helps demonstrate the virtue of courtesy by going out of his way to help the people he meets along his way, and by opposing villains who fail to act with a similar standard of courtesy.

Book VI: Canto VI Quotes

No wound, which warlike hand of enemy
Inflicts with dint of sword, so sore doth light,
As doth the poysnous sting, which infamy
Infixeth in the name of noble wight:
For by no art, nor any leaches might
It ever can recured be againe;

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), Calidore, The Blatant Beast

Related Themes:

Page Number: 938

Explanation and Analysis

This musing by the narrator from near the beginning of Canto VI of Book VI reflects on how a wound to a noble person's reputation can be even worse than a physical wound. This statement is validated by the actions of all the virtuous knights in the story, who are so concerned with their reputations that they will do anything to avoid being seen as cowardly or discourteous. The comparison of wounds to a reputation to a "poysnous sting" is a clear comparison to the Blatant Beast, a creature with many tongues who also poisons people that it bites. The attacks of the Blatant Beast are a thinly veiled metaphor of slander and attacks to reputation. The poisonous aspect of its bites seems to indicate that damage to a reputation might only linger and get worse over time. Baseless attacks on reputation, which the Blatant Beast represents, are the opposite of courtesy, and so the beast must be the final challenge for the courteous knight Sir Calidore.

Book VI: Canto VII Quotes

And after all, for greater infamie,
He by the heeles him hung upon a tree,
And baffuld so, that all which passed by,
The picture of his punishment might see,
And by the like ensample warned bee

Related Characters: Arthur , The Blatant Beast, Sir Turpine, Sir Calepine, Serena

Related Themes:

Page Number: 956

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes the punishment that Arthur gives to evil Sir Turpine, who on multiple occasions refused to offer help to Serena and Sir Calepine as well as cowardly attacking Arthur. While most evil knights get slain at some point in the story, Arthur spares Sir Turpine's life and instead strips him of all his knightly possessions and hangs him up as a warning for any other knights who might act discourteous or cowardly. While this might seem lenient compared to the treatment some other villains in the story get, it is a severe punishment in its own way, given how much even bad knights like Sir Turpine valued their status as knights and their reputations. While the Blatant Beast illustrates the consequences of falsely destroying someone's reputation, Arthur's behavior here shows that, for knights who truly do break the code of chivalry, shame can be an effective way to punish them and prevent others from doing the same.

Book VI: Canto IX Quotes

So there that night Sir *Calidore* did dwell,
And long while after, whilest him list remaine,
Dayly beholding the faire *Pastorell*,
And feeding on the bayt of his owne bane.
During which time he did her entertaine
With all kind courtesies, he could invent;
And every day, her companiee to gaine

Related Characters: Calidore, Pastorella, Coridon, Melibee, Colin Clout

Related Themes:

Page Number: 984

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from the beginning of a long interlude when the genre of the poem temporarily changes to pastoral. Pastorals were a genre of poetry in ancient Greece and Rome that celebrated rural life, and variations of this genre existed in some form up until Spenser's day and beyond. In fact, some of Spenser's other poetry is entirely in the pastoral genre. In this passage, Sir Calidore begins to fall in love with the fair maiden Pastorella, which in a larger sense symbolizes that he is falling in love with a pastoral shepherd's lifestyle and perhaps even considering leaving the knighthood. Nature plays an important role throughout the poem, and Pastorella and her lifestyle are portrayed as something beautiful that would clearly be attractive to any knight. Nevertheless, this pastoral interlude is interrupted by sudden violence, suggesting that despite all the charms of pastoral life, brave knights like Sir Calidore shouldn't give up their duties because they're still needed in the world.

Book VI: Canto XII Quotes

Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest,
Hope to escape his venomous despite,
More than my former writes, all were they clearest
From blamefull blot, and free from all that wite,
With which some wicked tongues did it backebite,
and bring into a mighty Peres displeasure,
That never so deserved to endite.
Therefore do you my rimes keep better measure,
And seeke to please, that now is counted wisemens threasure.

Related Characters: Narrator (speaker), The Blatant Beast

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1023

Explanation and Analysis

This quote ends *The Faerie Queene* (not counting any of the "Cantos of Mutabilitie," which were published after Spenser's death). It's not clear if this is the ending that Spenser would have picked for his epic, given that he still planned six more books at the time of his death, but it nevertheless provides a fitting conclusion. The narrator of the poem, who is a sort of stand-in for Spenser, writes that he knows his poetry isn't much, but he hopes the reader will ignore critics and still find something in his writing to like. This message is particularly interesting coming at the end of Book VI, which is all about the slander-spreading Blatant Beast. While the beast mostly attacks noble knights and ladies in the story, the many-tongued creature could also be interpreted as an embodiment of unfair literary critics. The

ending of the poem strikes a balance between pride and humility, with Spenser acknowledging flaws in his work but nevertheless arguing that readers will be able to find something of value in it.

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.

BOOK I: PROEM

The narrator of the poem calls out to a muse, imitating the style of other famous and renowned poems like Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. He promises to tell of the great battles and loves of knights and ladies. He asks the Muse Clio in particular to help him tell the story better, as well as the gods Cupid and Mars. He ends by praising Queen Elizabeth of England.

A "proem" is a type of introduction that was particularly popular in ancient Greek and Latin epic poetry. The narrators of these poems often asked the Muses (goddesses who inspired art, science, and poetry) to help them tell their stories. The narrator makes this connection to classical poems even clearer by mentioning Virgil's Aeneid, *which was from ancient Rome.* Orlando Furioso *actually was not an ancient poem—it would've been published only a few decades before* The Faerie Queene*—but it, too, looked to the past for inspiration. This shows how, while Spenser had a lot of admiration for past poets, he also read peers and more contemporary works.*

BOOK I: CANTO I

A knight in armor dented from fierce battle rides across a plain. He is a faithful knight who wears a red cross on his chest and his **shield** (and so he is called the Redcross Knight). He has been sent on a quest to slay a dragon by the great queen of **Faerie Court** in fairy land, Gloriana.

Gloriana (aka The Faerie Queene) is the stand-in for Queen Elizabeth, who is mentioned by name in the proem and in the poem's dedication. While some have speculated on Spenser's motives for dedicating the poem to Elizabeth (for example, if he was trying to flatter her to win a place in her court for himself), if one takes the poem at face value, it is a celebration of Elizabeth's rule and of British culture in general. As the subtitle to this book suggests, the Redcross Knight represents the virtue of holiness, and so it's fitting that his shield has a red Christian cross on it. The shield is so important that it gives the knight his name.

A lovely lady (Una) mounted on a white donkey rides alongside the Redcross Knight. She is very innocent and seems to have a hidden concern in her heart. She is virtuous and comes from a royal lineage. Riding behind the lovely woman is a dwarf, who carries the things the woman will need on her journey.

Una is the first of many virtuous ladies in the poem defined by her innocence and chastity. While chastity plays a role in many religiously inspired works, it is particularly significant in The Faerie Queene *because Queen Elizabeth (to whom the poem is dedicated) was an unmarried queen—something that was very unusual at the time.*

It begins to storm, and the Redcross Knight and the lovely lady are forced to take shelter in some trees. After the storm passes, they have a hard time finding their way back to the path they were taking earlier. The paths go in many different directions, so they end up taking the path that looks most beaten-down from use.

Characters in the poem often aren't named the first time they appear. Although the lady in the poem is named Una, her name isn't actually used until later in this book.

The Redcross Knight, the lovely lady (Una), and the dwarf arrive at a cave deep in the woods. The lady cautions about danger ahead. But the knight argues that it's better to overcome fear of the unknown and bravely go forward. The lady replies that she knows the dangers of the area better, and that a monster called Error lives in the cave.

All of the knights in the poem follow a code of conduct called chivalry. One of the worst things a knight can do is appear cowardly, and so in this case, the Redcross Knight doesn't back down from the challenge of the unknown cave.

The Redcross Knight remains determined to enter the cave, despite the lovely lady's warnings. He goes forward and sees Error, which is a half-serpent, half-woman monster, lying on the ground with her tail in knots. She is surrounded by thousands of offspring that suck poison out of her.

Many of the characters and particularly the monsters in the poem have very literal names, with forms that represent what their names mean. Errors, for example, have a "poisonous" effect on the soul, and so the monster Error has poison in her blood.

Error sees the Redcross Knight and backs away, preferring to remain in darkness. But the knight uses his sword to force Error to stay in the light, angering her, and prompting her to attempt to attack with her stinger. The knight responds with a strike that hits the monster's shoulder.

Errors are often made due to ignorance, and so it makes sense that the monster Error prefers to stay in the darkness. Being "brought to light" is what causes Error to weaken.

Error is stunned, but soon her body rises back up. The monster wraps around the Redcross Knight, trapping him. The lovely lady cries out that the knight must use his faith to strangle the monster, or else he'll be strangled first. The knight gets one hand free and grips the monster fiercely, causing her to release her own grip.

While the knights in the poem are powerful and brave, they are not impervious to the many villains they face. Even a knight as holy as Redcross is vulnerable to Error (as well as to error), something that foreshadows later events in the poem.

Error vomits out poison, mixed with various books and papers as well as eyeless frogs and toads. The Redcross Knight nearly chokes on the awful smells, but the monster's foul offspring can't hurt him. The knight gathers his strength and this time manages to successfully chop Error's head from her body. Black blood spews out.

Error's offspring are an important part of her character, since the implication is that errors lead to more errors. The presence of books and papers in her vomit symbolizes false teachings—which, for Spenser, included non-Protestant Christian teachings.

Error's offspring gather around her body and suck the remaining life out of it. The offspring eat so much that they burst, killing themselves. The lovely lady congratulates the Redcross Knight, saying that he is worthy of his armor (which bears the red cross symbolizing Christianity).

By chopping Error's head off, the Redcross Knight solves the root of the problem. Without Error's head, even her children can't survive, and so this section shows how, while errors can multiply, they can also all be destroyed together with decisive action.

The Redcross Knight mounts his steed again with the lovely lady and rides back the way they came. Eventually, they come upon an old Sire in long black clothes, with a long beard and a book hanging around his belt.

Although there's an overarching plot and plenty of recurring characters, the poem has an episodic structure, and once one adventure concludes, it's on to the next one.

The Sire salutes the Redcross Knight. He begins to tell the knight of a nearby evil creature, which the knight eagerly asks about. The Sire advises the knight to rest before confronting the evil creature, and so they all go back to the old Sire's home.

One of the key parts of chivalry is that a good knight will always help people in need, and so this is why Redcross is interested in defeating the evil creature.

The old Sire lives in a humble home in a dale by the edge of the forest, not far from a small chapel. It turns out, however, that the Sire is actually an evil sorcerer called Archimago. While the Redcross Knight and the lovely lady are asleep, Archimago looks up some curses in his magic books. He summons legions of flying sprites.

The Sire, who turns out to be the evil wizard Archimago, is just one of many characters in The Faerie Queene *who turn out to be different than they appear on the surface.*

Archimago sends two sprites in particular to trouble the Redcross Knight in his sleep. One sprite gives the knight dreams of lust, while the other takes the shape of the lovely lady (whose name is Una) and seems to lay beside him.

Just as chastity is associated with the virtuous characters in the poem, lust is a trait associated with villains and flawed characters. Here, Archimago tries to stir up lust in the Redcross Knight in order to draw him to the dark side.

At first, the Redcross Knight is enchanted by Una's beauty, but when she offers him a kiss, suddenly he realizes that something is wrong. He is so angry that he almost decides to slay her, but he calms his anger and decides to test her instead. The false Una tearfully confesses her love to the knight, but the knight, troubled by what he hears, nevertheless resists her temptations and eventually falls back asleep.

The Redcross Knight isn't immune to temptation, but ultimately, his commitment to chivalry allows him to stay chaste. In fact, he is so committed to chastity that he considers slaying Una (or at least the sprite pretending to be Una) in order to keep his virtue.

BOOK I: CANTO II

The sprites go back to their master, Archimago, and report their failure. Archimago transforms one of the sprites to look like a young squire, then puts the squire in bed next to the sprite that looks like Una. Archimago then wakes the Redcross Knight and tells him to go witness the shameful things that his supposedly chaste lady is doing.

Many of the villains in the poem have access to a sort of shapeshifting magic, able to disguise not only their own appearances but the appearances of others as well.

The Redcross Knight sees the two sprites disguised as Una and the squire, entwined together in bed, and he nearly slays them but is restrained by Archimago. He goes back to his own bed in torment, and at dawn, he and the dwarf speed away on their horses.

The illusion magic of Archimago is convincing and it leads Redcross to mistakenly believe that his lady Una has been unfaithful to him.

Una wakes up and weeps to see that the Redcross Knight and the dwarf are gone. She tries to catch up with them in vain. With Una alone in the woods, Archimago sees an opportunity. The crafty sorcerer decides to disguise himself as the Redcross Knight.

Without a knight like Redcross around to protect her, a lady like Una is vulnerable. With a couple of notable exceptions, most of the virtuous women in the poem are helpless, perhaps reflecting ideas about gender when the poem was written.

Meanwhile, the real Redcross Knight, who is in fact St. George (a famous British dragon-killing saint), happens to run into an armed Saracen (a Muslim) The Saracen's **shield** contains the words *Sans foy* ("without faith"). Next to Sansfoy the Saracen is a lady (Duessa) in scarlet who wears a Persian-style crown. She is the Saracen's lover, and she asks him to fight the Redcross Knight.

Although medieval Europe is most associated with Christianity, Spain was an Islamic country during much of the Middle Ages, and the Crusades brought many Christian European soldiers to the Middle East. Muslims had mostly been driven out of Spain by Spenser's time, but they were stock villains in medieval romances that would have inspired The Faerie Queene.

The Redcross Knight and Sansfoy the Saracen battle each other with the ferocity of two rams. Sansfoy finds he's unable to hurt the knight and curses the cross for protecting Redcross. At last, the Redcross Knight strikes the Saracen down, and he dies.

The fact that Sansfoy (whose name literally means "without faith") is defeated by the holy Redcross knight suggests that, from Spenser's perspective, Protestant Christianity is more powerful than rival religions.

After seeing her lover Sansfoy die, the scarlet lady (Duessa) pleads for mercy from the Redcross Knight. The knight is moved and asks who she is. In tears, the lady tells the story of how she was the daughter of an emperor. She was engaged to a fair prince, but the prince was suddenly slain. Soon after, the proud Saracen Sansfoy found her and took her with him. Sansfoy had two younger brothers: Sansjoy and Sansloy.

Duessa is one of the most important recurring characters in the story. While Una is associated with the color white, Duessa is associated with scarlet, which suggests from the very beginning that she might not be as innocent or as helpless as she appears (since the color red can be associated with blood, or perhaps fire).

The lady, whose gives her name as Fidessa, tells the Redcross Knight that she is now alone and asks him to show her pity. The knight pledges to protect her, and they begin to ride together.

Fidessa is a name that suggests faithfulness, and so it seems at first that Fidessa is a good match for the Redcross Knight.

The Redcross Knight and Fidessa reach two big trees, where they decide to take shelter from the heat in the shade. The knight gets the idea of making a garland for the lady, but as he breaks off a branch, blood trickles out of the hole.

The blood trickling out of the tree foreshadows that something about the current situation isn't right and recalls the scarlet color associated with "Fidessa."

A voice calls out, warning the Redcross Knight and Fidessa to run away. The voice is the tree—he reveals that he was once a man named Fradubio, but he was turned into a tree by a cruel witch. The knight asks who the witch was, and Fradubio says it was Duessa, a sorceress who has ensnared many knights with her tricks.

Being turned into a tree was a fairly common mythological punishment. The similarity between the names Fidessa and Duessa is a big clue for readers about Fidessa's real identity, but the characters in the poem often realize things after the readers do.

Fradubio used to love a lady who also got turned into a tree, whose name was Fraelissa. He tells the story: Fraelissa and the disguised sorceress Duessa have a contest to see which of them Fradubio considers the fairest. Seeing that she can't win, Duessa decides to use her magic and turns Fraelissa into a tree. Duessa then becomes Fradubio's lady.

Like Archimago, Duessa is able to disguise her appearance. There are limits to her magic, however—even her illusions aren't enough to compete with the real Fraelissa, which is why she turns her into a tree.

Fradubio continues his story: At first, he and Duessa are happy. Then one day, Fradubio sees Duessa bathing, which reveals her true form as an old woman. Fradubio makes a plan to run away, but Duessa senses the change in his manner. She also turns him into a tree, placing him right next to Fraelissa (who is also still a tree).

Another limit to magic like Duessa's is that it isn't permanent, and so false characters risk getting caught.

Fradubio tells the Redcross Knight that he will remain stuck in tree form until he comes in contact with the water of a living well. Fidessa overhears this—it turns out that Fidessa is in fact just a new disguise for Duessa. Duessa looks afraid and faints, but the Redcross Knight doesn't realize the truth about her identity.

In real life, water is often a symbol of purity or of the act of purifying (such as in baptism), and it sometimes plays this role in the poem as well, as it does here where it is revealed to be the cure for Fradubio's condition.

BOOK I: CANTO III

The narrator laments that fair Una is in trouble. Nevertheless, she remains faithful as she wanders in search of the Redcross Knight. Suddenly, a Lion rushes out of the woods, with a fierce gaping mouth. But when it sees Una, its fury goes away.

Many cantos begin with the narrator making a brief commentary on the action. Here, the narrator builds sympathy for Una by describing her pitiful state.

The Lion puts aside its pride and anger and kisses Una's feet. Una is moved to tears by new affection for the Lion. Una tells the Lion about how the Redcross Knight seemingly abandoned her. The Lion decides to guard Una as she continues on her search for the Redcross Knight.

Lions have long been a symbol of pride and power. Although pride sometimes takes on a negative meaning, here the Lion's pride is closer to nobility. Throughout the poem, virtuous characters often have a strong connection to nobility.

The Lion keeps watch over Una as she sleeps and walks by her side as she travels across the land. After going through several deserted areas, at last Una finds evidence of a path where people have been recently walking. Una and the Lion come across a damsel (Abessa) carrying a pot of water.

Without her Redcross Knight, Una is metaphorically lost, and so this metaphor gets represented in the poem by a lot of literal wandering around through various lands.

Upon seeing the Lion, the damsel throws away her pot of water and flees back home to her blind mother. Una keeps traveling and comes to a closed door, which the Lion tears open. Inside, Una finds an old woman who prays 900 Our Fathers a day as well as 900 Hail Marys. It's the blind mother. The blind mother wears sackcloth and fasts often.

The damsel's fear of the Lion suggests that she is not as virtuous as Una, who has nothing to fear around the Lion. The blind woman who prays hundreds of prayers a day is a parody of Catholics (who have a repetitive prayer ritual called the rosary that Protestants like Spenser wouldn't practice). Protestants and Catholics were in conflict in Spenser's Britain, and this conflict often plays out in the poem, with Spenser favoring the Protestant side.

The day ends, and Una lies down to sleep under the Lion's watch, still at the blind mother's house. All of a sudden, in the middle of the night, someone begins to knock many times on the door. It is a criminal who robs sacred items from churches and steals alms meant for the poor. The criminal uses his stolen wealth to treat the damsel Abessa, the blind mother Corceca's daughter.

Abessa's love for a criminal confirms that she is not as virtuous as Una, who only loves the holy Redcross Knight. The mother's blindness prevents her from seeing what her daughter is doing and can be interpreted as a kind of spiritual blindness as well.

The criminal gets a surprise when he comes into Corceca's house and is suddenly pinned by the Lion. The Lion tears the criminal into a thousand pieces.

Although the Lion is tame toward the virtuous Una, he is merciless toward criminals.

The next morning, Una wakes up, still longing to see the Redcross Knight. Just then Abessa and Corceca notice that Kirkrapine (the criminal) has been killed by the Lion, and they begin to grieve. Una tries to leave, but Abessa and Corceca come after her, cursing the whole time.

Abessa and Corceca are upset by what the Lion did, but the poem suggests that they are simply facing the consequences at last for the sinful lives they were leading.

Una gets away from Abessa and Corceca. Suddenly she finds a knight whom she believes to be the Redcross Knight but who is actually Archimago in disguise. Una approaches him, weeping and asking where he's been. She says she was afraid that he hated her and that she would never see him again.

Sometimes evil characters in the story are able to impersonate virtuous characters, while other times, their evil nature shows through. Perhaps here it is Una's desperation that allows her to be tricked by a false version of the Redcross Knight.

Archimago (disguised as the Redcross Knight) tells Una that he left her to go on an adventure but that he vows now to remain her faithful servant. A joyful Una begins to ride with the knight, telling him about her journey so far with the Lion.

This section may seem to be joyful, but the reader knows that Archimago is a trickster, and so anticipation builds for what will eventually go wrong for Una.

Suddenly, Una and Archimago (disguised as the Redcross Knight) are approached by a fierce, sweaty rider with *Sans loy* written in red on his **shield**. The sight of the Redcross Knight causes the rider Sansloy to burn even hotter with rage and ready his spear. Sansloy attacks, and because Archimago's fake redcross shield doesn't have a real blessing on it, he is knocked off his horse and gored by the spear.

Archimago learns the hard way that when he disguises himself as the Redcross Knight, all other characters will treat him that way, not just Una. Archimago is an evil character who might otherwise be allied with Sansloy, but because he can't drop his disguise around Una, he has to fight Sansloy and suffer the consequences.

Sansloy gets off his horse and promises to kill the Redcross Knight (who is actually Archimago in disguise) for what he did to his brother Sansfoy. Una pleads for Sansloy not to kill the knight, saying that he is the truest knight in the world. Her words don't move Sansloy, but when he takes off Archimago's helmet, he is shocked to recognize the old sorcerer.

This case of mistaken identity nearly gets Archimago killed, although Sansloy recognizes the old man once his helmet comes off. Helmets play an important role in disguising identity throughout the story—they represent how a person's external appearance doesn't always match with their inner selves.

Sansloy asks Archimago what he's doing there. But Archimago is in a daze, so he doesn't reply. Sansloy doesn't kill Archimago. Next, the Lion tries to fight Sansloy. Sansloy, however, is skilled with weapons and manages to pierce the Lion through the heart. Una is frightened because she now has no one to protect her. She becomes Sansloy's captive.

Virtuous characters in the poem aren't invincible, and here the noble Lion gets killed by Sansloy, showing how even without the power of holiness on his side, Sansloy is nevertheless a formidable foe.

BOOK I: CANTO IV

The narrator warns young knights like the Redcross Knight of how they can be led astray by people like Duessa (who is still disguised as a fair lady named Fidessa). As the Redcross Knight travels, he comes across an impressive building that looks like it could be the house of a prince. Many people from all ranks of society seem to be going towards the house, but few return. Duessa urges the Redcross Knight to approach.

In a book that began with an encounter with the monster Error, it is fitting that the Redcross Knight spends much of the book being led astray by a false woman.

The house turns out to be more of a palace, with high brick walls that have golden foil all over them. But though the house looks impressive, it sits on a weak foundation. A porter named Malvenù lets them inside, where many people wait eagerly to see the lady of the palace.

The contrast between the strong-looking house and the weak foundation is an obvious metaphor that recalls a Bible parable about how structures built on weak foundations will fall. It also suggests that outward beauty can be deceiving.

On a bright throne, wearing royal robes, is a maiden queen who seems to shine like the sun. She looks up toward heaven, refusing to look down at earth. Beneath her is an ugly dragon. This queen is the daughter of Pluto (god of the underworld) and Proserpina (Pluto's queen, whom he kidnapped from the world above). Her name is Lucifera.

Lucifera's name is a clear reference to Lucifer (Satan, the devil), who was known for his pride. Lucifera, then, is a female embodiment of pride, something that her queenly appearance here confirms.

Lucifera usurped the throne through trickery and brutality, and she has become a tyrant. Duessa (still disguised) leads the Redcross Knight toward Lucifera.

Lucifera's shaky claim to her throne reflects the unstable foundation of her house.

Lucifera comes down from her throne, looking as splendid as the goddess Juno, or perhaps a peacock, as she gets into her coach. The coach is drawn by six different beasts, each of which has one of her six counselors riding on it. Each of the six beasts is monstrous, resembling a different one of the seven deadly sins (Idleness, Gluttony, Lechery, Greed, Envy, and Wrath), with Lucifera representing the seventh: Pride.

Peacocks are associated with pride today and have had that association since long before even Spenser's time. The seven deadly sins were traditionally considered to be the roots of all other sins a Christian could commit, but rather than fear them, Lucifera literally uses them to pull her forward as the beasts that move her coach.

Lucifera and the deadly sin beasts ride for pleasure across flowery fields, with Duessa sitting right next to Lucifera. The Redcross Knight, however, is out of place in this crowd. When Lucifera has finished her ride and returns to the palace, a knight is waiting there with *Sans joy* written in red on his **shield**.

Lucifera's grand ride on her beasts is a way for her to extravagantly flaunt her queenly status, although some, like the Redcross Knight, can see through her hollow display.

Sansjoy notices that the Redcross Knight has the **shield** of his slain brother, Sansfoy. Sansjoy starts a fight with the Redcross Knight. They clash, but Lucifera orders them to stop, saying that they should fight properly the next day.

By this point, it's clear that all "pagans" like Sansjoy are mortal enemies of virtuous Christians like the Redcross Knight, and so conflict between the two of them is inevitable.

Sansjoy lies to Lucifera and tells her about how the Redcross Knight used treachery to kill his brother Sansfoy. He throws down his gauntlet as a promise to fight the Redcross Knight in battle the next day.

Even evil knights often followed certain parts of the knightly code of conduct, which is why Sansjoy asks for a duel instead of just trying to murder Redcross outright. A gauntlet was an armored glove, and throwing down one's gauntlet was a way to issue a challenge to another knight.

Night falls. While everyone is sleeping, Duessa gets up and goes to find Sansjoy, who is awake and plotting ways to defeat the Redcross Knight. Duessa talks about how she loved Sansjoy's fallen brother Sansfoy but how the Redcross Knight has trapped her with him. She asks Sansjoy to avenge Sansfoy.

But while Sansjoy has requested a duel, it may not be a fair fight if Duessa gets involved. This confirms that Sansjoy is not a righteous knight, despite his willingness to follow certain parts of chivalry.

Sansjoy promises that he will do his duty to Sansfoy's ghost by sacrificing the blood of the Redcross Knight.

Both good and evil characters in the poem seek revenge—the difference here is that Sansfoy was not a righteous character and so doesn't deserve vengeance.

Duessa fears that Sansjoy may be defeated by bad fortune. Sansjoy reassures her. Duessa says she'll provide Sansjoy with hidden help.

Even evil characters like Duessa recognize the power of holy characters like Redcross, and they fear it.

BOOK I: CANTO V

At night, before his big battle with Sansjoy, the Redcross Knight is restless as he thinks of tactics to use against his opponent. At last, the sun rises, and the knight gets ready to face his foe.

Then as now, restless sleep is often a sign of a character who has concerns on their mind.

As the Redcross Knight comes to the palace's common hall, he finds many bards, minstrels, and chroniclers singing songs. Soon, Sansjoy appears in full armor. Finally, Lucifera herself makes a stately procession into the hall, with Duessa at her side.

The conflict between Redcross and Sansjoy isn't just a personal grudge but in fact a grand spectacle that will involve everyone in the house.

Duessa hangs Sansfoy's **shield** from a tree—both she and the shield will go to the victor of the fight. A trumpet sounds, and the battle begins. At first, Sansjoy is strong, giving fierce blows, but the Redcross Knight is also strong. It's a deadlock. At one point, Sansjoy happens to glance his dead brother's shield, and this causes him to become even more ferocious.

For a knight, losing one's shield is a sign of being humbled. By reclaiming his dead brother's shield, then, Sansjoy would also reclaim some of his dead brother's honor. This is why seeing the shield motivates Sansjoy to fight even harder.

Duessa shouts to encourage Sansjoy, but the Redcross Knight believes she's encouraging him. He begins to attack more furiously and is about to strike a mortal blow against Sansjoy when suddenly Sansjoy seems to disappear. Duessa asks the Redcross Knight to put aside his vengeance, saying that he has won her and the **shield**.

Although Sansjoy is strong, the Redcross Knight is clearly stronger, again fortified by his holiness. Sansjoy's sudden disappearance is clearly the work of Duessa, showing how when evil is losing, it will cheat to avoid consequences.

The Redcross Knight, however, isn't satisfied and still wants to kill Sansjoy. Trumpets greet his victory, and the knight is presented with Sansfoy's **shield**. He gives the shield as a gift to Lucifera. There is a celebration for the Redcross Knight's victory, and he goes back to his room in the palace to have his wounds treated.

Although mercy is generally regarded as a virtue, pagans like Sansfoy are treated as undeserving of mercy, worthy only of death to a holy knight like Redcross.

Meanwhile Duessa weeps until the evening. When it's dark, however, she ventures out to see Night, a woman in black who is in a chariot pulled by all-black horses. Duessa asks Night why she allowed Sansfoy to fall to the Redcross Knight's sword. Night admits that she is saddened by their loss but says she is powerless to change the course of destiny.

Even concepts as big as night are portrayed as characters in the poem. Night's all-black clothes evoke the nighttime's darkness, and she continues a motif of dark being associated with evil while light is associated with virtue.

Though Night cannot change destiny, she promises that the Redcross Knight will pay a price in his own blood for slaying Sansfoy. Night asks who Duessa is, and she replies that she's the daughter of Deceit and Shame. Night says that she is perhaps one of Duessa's ancestors and promises to stay with her.

Despite Night's power, she is unable to intervene. Both in the poem and in mythology in general it is common for powerful characters to have restrictions on their powers, perhaps to explain why they don't always get their way.

Together, Night and Duessa ride to the place where Sansjoy is laying on the ground. They take him away on their chariot to heal his serious wounds, driving towards a hole to the underworld and entering it.

Duessa, a master of illusion, didn't teleport or shield Sansjoy, she simply made him impossible to see.

In the smoke- and sulfur-filled underworld, where the god Pluto reigns, Night and Duessa continue to ride their chariot with the wounded Sansjoy. Along the way, they see many horrific sights, such as the many-headed dog Cerberus and the fiery punishment of damned souls. They see famous figures from Greek and Roman mythology, like Sisyphus (who is cursed to always push a stone up a hill but never reach the top) and Tantalus (who is cursed to always be thirsty). At last, they reach Æsculapius, a god of medicine who was killed and sent to the underworld at one point for being too good at stopping death.

Trips to the underworld are relatively common in mythological stories, and this won't be the last one in this poem. The characters who appear in this section are familiar to people who know Greek and Roman stories about the underworld. Spenser often combines new elements of his poem with references to past epic poems with which his readership would have been broadly familiar, thereby placing himself within the same literary tradition.

Æsculapius is kept imprisoned in chains. When he lived in the mortal world, Æsculapius helped heal a handsome huntsman named Hippolytus. This healing was so miraculous that Jupiter deemed Æsculapius too powerful and struck him down with a thunderbolt.

The fate of Æsculapius is a little ironic, since he was trying to be a good doctor but got punished for being too good. Perhaps it is fitting that he appears in this section about pride, since he showed pride by not respecting the authority of Jupiter.

Night and Duessa present Sansjoy to Æsculapius for treatment. At first, Æsculapius is reluctant to help because he's afraid of angering Jupiter again. Night argues that she could hurt Æsculapius even worse than Jupiter, and this convinces him to help. Duessa leaves them to work and returns to Lucifera's palace.

Æsculapius's willingness to work with Night and Duessa suggests that his work as a doctor is more about proving his own skill than about exercising virtue, implying that perhaps he deserves to be in the underworld after all.

When Duessa gets back to the palace, she finds the Redcross Knight and the dwarf visiting the dungeon. They witness many people who were imprisoned by their own pride, such as an old king of Babylon and the famously wealthy king Croesus. The wide range of captives includes many figures from Roman times, such as Julius Caesar, the general Hannibal, and Cleopatra, with thousands of others who are all consumed by pride.

This section provides a parallel to the earlier section listing all the various residents of the underworld. What links all these historical figures is that they were all undone by their own pride. Seeing them helps the Redcross Knight realize the true nature of the house he's staying in—the House of Pride.

The dungeon helps the Redcross Knight and the dwarf realize the true nature of Lucifera's palace of pride. They decide to flee.

Having seen the consequences of pride in the House of Pride's dungeon, Redcross decides he doesn't want to be a part of it.

BOOK I: CANTO VI

After defeating Archimago (who had been disguised as the Redcross Knight), Sansloy takes Una with him. He tries to court her with his words, but she remains not tempted. When his words don't work, Sansloy decides instead to try to take Una's chastity by force. She struggles and cries out so loudly that the sound echoes throughout the surrounding area.

While virtuous knights respect the chastity of maidens, the less virtuous ones often try to take women by force. Archimago may have the appearance of the Redcross Knight, but even this is not enough to tempt Una.

A group of fauns and satyrs (half-goat, half-man wood gods of ancient Greece and Rome) hear Una shouting. They go toward the source of the sound and find Una in a distressed state, causing Sansloy to run away. Taking pity on her, the fauns and satyrs want to comfort her, and so they bend before her to show their obedience. Then they play their pipes, and treating Una like a queen, they bring her to the old forest god Sylvanus.

Like the Lion, the satyrs are another force of nature that comes to protect Una when she needs it most. While nature can be unpredictable, even in The Faerie Queene, *it is most often a force for good, acting in favor of virtuous characters and punishing those who are less than virtuous.*

Sylvanus is old but is still passionate and enjoys pleasure. He has never seen a mortal as fair as Una. He and the other wood gods begin to worship Una, turning her into a sort of idol.

Idolatry (worshipping false gods instead of the true god) is a sin in Christianity, and so while the satyrs do help Una, it's implied that they are pagans who perhaps don't fully understand what they're doing.

One day, a fierce but noble knight called Sir Satyrane comes to the woods. He is known for his strength, which allows him to overcome even the most savage wild beasts. Una develops affection toward Satyrane and worries about how he tempts death so often. Nevertheless, Una's heart remains in anguish as she longs to see the real Redcross Knight again, and she tells Satyrane one day of her plan to escape the satyrs.

Sir Satyrane will become a crucial figure in later books. He seems to combine the nobility of nature that the satyrs embody with the more traditional nobility of a knight like Redcross. Like any good knight, he sees the helpless Una and vows to protect her, respecting that she is already pledged to another knight.

Sir Satyrane carries Una out of the woods with him, onto a plain. There they see a weary pilgrim (Archimago), whom they approach to ask for news about the Redcross Knight. The pilgrim carries a distinctive staff and has been across the world. The traveler tells Una that in fact he has seen the knight she's looking for, both living and dead.

Pilgrims (people traveling for religious reasons) were common in medieval times. Spenser was highly influenced by The Canterbury Tales, *a poem that is all about a group of traveling pilgrims.*

Una feels a chill go through her veins. The pilgrim tells a story about how he saw the Redcross Knight fighting a pagan, and the pagan struck him down. Satyrane asks where the pagan is now, so that they can find him and strike him down. The pilgrim replies that he's nearby, washing his wounds in a fountain.

The reader knows that the pilgrim is lying about the Redcross Knight's death, which suggests that he is yet another evil character who has managed to disguise himself as something harmless.

Satyrane and Una head towards the fountain where they find a pagan. Satyrane tells the pagan to rise up and accuses him of slaying the Redcross Knight. The pagan, who turns out to be Sansloy, replies that he never slew the Redcross Knight but in fact only struck down Archimago. Nevertheless, Satyrane and Sansloy begin to fight, going at each other as fiercely as two boars.

Although Satyrane didn't even know Una until recently, he is willing to fight to protect her, as any good knight following the code of chivalry would do. The comparison between Satyrane's fighting and a wild boar emphasizes his connection to nature.

Satyrane and Sansloy continue raining down blows on each other. Suddenly, Sansloy notices Una and tries to go after her to catch her. But Satyrane keeps Sansloy occupied with more attacks, allowing Una to escape. However, the pilgrim, who turns out to be Archimago in disguise, chases after her.

Befitting his shapeshifting nature, Archimago keeps showing up in the story under different disguises. He represents how evil can take different forms depending on the occasion.

BOOK I: CANTO VII

In the disguise of Fidessa again, Duessa comes in search of the Redcross Knight. She finds him without his armor on near a fountain. Duessa knows that this particular fountain is enchanted and that whoever drinks from it will suddenly grow feeble, so she tricks the Redcross Knight into drinking from it. He becomes weak.

Water is typically a purifying and strengthening element, but here it actually makes the Redcross Knight weaker. Duessa, who is capable of disguising herself as a fair maiden, seems to spread corruption wherever she goes, even to something as pure as a fountain of water.

All of a sudden, a giant named Orgoglio shows up and challenges the Redcross Knight. Being weakened, the Redcross Knight can't get to his enchanted **shield**. Orgoglio strikes many times with his mace and knocks the knight down but doesn't slay him after Duessa asks him to stop at the last moment.

The Redcross Knight's shield is the source of his power. With its red cross on it, the shield is a clear symbol of his faith, and without the holy power that the shield represents, the Redcross Knight can't defeat an opponent like Orgoglio.

Duessa suggests that instead, Orgoglio can claim the Redcross Knight as a prisoner and force him into service. Orgoglio agrees and takes the defeated knight to a dungeon. In the dungeon is a great scaly monster with seven heads, which the giant sets Duessa atop so she can ride it as a mount.

Evil characters like Duessa don't just want to defeat virtuous characters but to humble them as well. In a way, many of them are evangelists for evil, trying to convert other characters to being evil as well.

Meanwhile, the dwarf, who wasn't noticed by Orgoglio but who saw what happened to the Redcross Knight, gathers up the knight's scattered possessions and goes off to relay the news of what happened. He travels far and happens to meet Una as she's fleeing from the pagans with Satyrane.

Messages had to be relayed on foot in medieval times, and so minor characters like Una's dwarf often play a key role in connecting characters in different locations.

Una is distressed to hear the dwarf's news about the Redcross Knight and she faints three times. The dwarf tells her about how the knight was misled by Duessa and Archimago and how he was captured and taken away by Orgoglio the giant.

Una's excessive fainting emphasizes how despite all her virtue, she is very frail without the protection of the Redcross Knight.

Though the dwarf doesn't know if the Redcross Knight is still alive, Una remains faithful in her love and wants to find him. As she rides to search for him, she eventually meets a noble knight and his squire. This knight is Prince Arthur (who will eventually become the famous King Arthur). On his breast, he wears the likeness of a lady's head, with many shining stones and jewels on his clothes. His **shield**, meanwhile, is covered in perfect diamonds.

While Greek and Roman myths are perhaps the greatest source of inspiration in The Faerie Queene, *both the legends and the history of Britain are also central to the poem. Spenser freely uses characters like Arthur who originated in other epics, as did many other writers from his time, like Shakespeare.*

Prince Arthur is immune to evil magic and enchantments. When he approaches Una, he can tell that she is carrying a secret sorrow with her, so he asks her what's wrong. Una describes the grief she feels related to the Redcross Knight. Arthur assures her that he can understand the depth of her sadness.

Unsurprisingly, Spenser often portrays Britain in a positive light, and so a character as connected to British identity as Arthur will always be among the strongest and most virtuous characters in the story.

Una describes more about her situation to Prince Arthur, including how she is the daughter of a King and Queen who ruled in the area near the Phison, Euphrates, and Gehons rivers. A horrible dragon attacked the kingdom, however, laying waste to the countryside and forcing the king and queen to flee the castle. Many knights fought to force the dragon out of the capital, but they were unsuccessful. Eventually, news of the dragon reached the court of Gloriana the Faerie Queene. From this court rode the Redcross Knight, who will hopefully be able to slay the dragon.

The rivers mentioned in this passage are three of the four rivers that flowed through the Biblical Eden, suggesting that Una's homeland is literally a paradise. Dragons, which show up in mythology around the world, often acted as a stand-in for evil or particularly for paganism in British mythology, notably in the legend of the British St. George the dragon slayer. Gloriana's interest in slaying a distant dragon suggests that she is a benevolent ruler, once again portraying Queen Elizabeth in a positive light.

From then on, Una loved the Redcross Knight, but she was separated from him due to the tricks of Archimago, who made the knight doubt her faithfulness and ride off. Having finished her tale, Una collapses, and Prince Arthur promises to comfort her and help her find her knight again.

The plot of the poem often hinges on coincidences of characters being in the right place at the right time, such as how Arthur suddenly showed up here. Perhaps, however, instead of coincidences, these events could be viewed as the intervention of a benevolent but mysterious God.

BOOK I: CANTO VIII

The dwarf, Una, and Prince Arthur ride until they reach Orgoglio the giant's castle. They blow a horn at the gate, and Orgoglio leaves Duessa to see what the noise is. Orgoglio is ready to fight, and he lifts up his big club, but Arthur dodges it.

The blowing of a horn at the gate recalls the Biblical story of Jericho, where a seemingly impenetrable city wall fell to the simple blowing of a horn by one of the Israelites.

Orgoglio is struck down so hard that his club gets stuck in the ground. While he is trying to bring it up, Prince Arthur smites off his left arm, causing streams of blood to flow out. The giant lets out a fearsome bellow. Duessa hears it and rides out the gate on her seven-headed beast, but Arthur's squire stops her. Duessa has a golden cup that she uses to perform magic, and she uses it to weaken Arthur's squire's courage.

Arthur is clearly stronger than the giant, as Redcross might have been if he'd had his shield with him. As was the case during Redcross's earlier duel with one of the Saracens, Duessa intervenes in an attempt to give one of the competitors an unfair advantage.

Angered by the magic Duessa used on his squire, Prince Arthur smites off one of the heads of Duessa's mount. A sea of blood comes out and stains Duessa's clothes. Duessa's beast can't bear the pain of losing its head, so it throws her off.

Lots of heads get cut off over the course of the poem. The head can be seen as something's root, and so beheading a creature is the fullest way to exterminate it (even if, in this case, Duessa's many-headed creature lives on).

Meanwhile, Orgoglio the giant has recovered and comes charging at Prince Arthur. He brings his club down hard on Arthur's **shield** and believes it impossible that any mortal could withstand such a blow. But as Arthur falls, a veil comes off his shield, and it lets out a blazing light that stuns both Orgoglio and Duessa's beast. Orgoglio realizes that the shield represents a power that he won't be able to overcome.

This scene with Arthur's shield illustrates why Redcross was at such a disadvantage earlier without the ability to use his own shield. Like many evil characters, Orgoglio makes the mistake of underestimating the power and endurance of a righteous character like Arthur.

Prince Arthur smites off Orgoglio's right leg below the knee, and the giant falls down like a tree, making the earth quake. Arthur goes over to give a mortal blow by chopping off the giant's head. When the giant runs out of breath, his great body disappears, and all that's left is an empty bladder.

The empty bladder that remains after Orgoglio is dead symbolizes how empty his life was. Though Orgoglio was a strong giant who managed to subdue Redcross, his lack of faith made him vulnerable when he faced a holy man like Arthur.

Duessa grieves to see the fall of Orgoglio. The squire captures her and brings her to Prince Arthur. Una thanks them for all that they've done for her and asks that they keep searching for the dungeon that holds the Redcross Knight. They force their way into the castle and find that it's seemingly deserted.

The emptiness inside Orgoglio's castle complements the empty bladder he left behind when he died. Evil characters often seem impressive on the surface, only for their true weakness to be revealed in death.

After searching around the castle, Prince Arthur and Una at last find a slow-moving old man who has the keys to every door in the castle. The old man is Ignaro, and he acted as a kind of foster father to Orgoglio. Ignaro doesn't answer Arthur's questions about the keys, so at last, Arthur just takes them.

This section is a strange and perhaps comic interlude that builds anticipation for the moment when Una and Redcross are finally reunited.

Prince Arthur tries the keys on various doors in the castle and finds great quantities of gold, but the floors are dirty with the blood of innocents who have been slain. He finds an altar that depicts the martyrdom of Christians. After much searching, Arthur finally finds an iron door and calls through it. A weak voice responds to him.

The juxtaposition of gold with the blood of innocents shows how evil men like the giant Orgoglio may be able to amass wealth but at a huge moral cost.

Prince Arthur breaks down the iron door. He has to descend a long way in the dark cell, but finally, he finds the Redcross Knight, who has lost all his muscles and is now very weak. Una runs to see him and cries tears of joy. She curses Fortune for being so bad to her and the knight lately.

The Redcross Knight shows visible signs of being weakened by his imprisonment, which perhaps also reflect a weakened spiritual condition—that he has become more doubtful after his defeat.

Prince Arthur asks what they should do about Duessa, the source of all their recent misfortune. Una suggests that instead of killing her, they should steal her robes and leave her naked. They do so, exposing Duessa as a wrinkled old witch. They let her go, and she flees into the wilderness. Una, the Redcross Knight, and Arthur stay in the giant's castle for a while to rest.

For Duessa, a master of deception, the most fitting punishment is to leave her naked where she'll be incapable of hiding what she truly is. Her flight into the wilderness suggests that this might not be the last time she appears in the poem, however.

BOOK I: CANTO IX

The narrator praises the knightly chivalry that led Prince Arthur to help free the Redcross Knight from his imprisonment. Eventually, it is time for Arthur to take his leave of the Redcross Knight and Una. Una asks where Arthur comes from, but Arthur replies that he was taken away at a young age and trained to be a knight, and so he doesn't know.

Although chivalry isn't necessarily a religious virtue, it is closely related to the Redcross Knight's holiness. Arthur and Redcross make good companions because they have similar chivalric values. Arthur's mysterious origins are consistent with how he's portrayed in other stories.

Arthur talks about how the great wizard Merlin helped tutor him. Merlin told him that he was the heir of a king and would bring the light of truth. Arthur says that he has a secret wound, and Una asks what wound could trouble a gentle knight like him. Arthur explains that his wound is love. While he ignored love when he was younger, one day he was traveling through a forest and got off his steed to take a rest in the green grass when suddenly, in his slumber, he was greeted by a royal maiden.

This whole canto combines familiar information about the legendary King Arthur with new details that Spenser either invents or modifies in order to fit Arthur into his own poem. Like many knights, Arthur values love above all else, and while this trait isn't necessarily unique to Spenser's version of the character, the specifics of Arthur's love will be.

The royal maiden filled Arthur with joy. They talked for a while, and when she left him, she revealed that she was called the Faerie Queene. When Arthur awoke, he was in love with the woman from his dream and vowed to go try to find her. He regrets that he may be seeking in vain, but Una reassures him that the Queene of Faeries must be honored to have a knight as brave and skilled as Arthur. The Redcross Knight talks about his own love for Una.

Because Arthur has been proven to be such a virtuous and strong character, his adoration of the Faerie Queene confirms that she really is as wonderful as the Redcross Knight believes her to be. Though many characters in the story have flaws or make mistakes, the Faerie Queene herself seems to be infallible or close to it.

Arthur and the Redcross Knight shake hands, bound in friendship. Arthur gives the Redcross Knight diamonds, and in reply, the knight gives him a book containing the New Testament. They part, as Arthur goes off to seek his love.

This isn't the last time Arthur shows up in the poem—although he is never really the main character, he is nevertheless one of the most consistent elements in the poem after the Faerie Queene herself.

As Una and the Redcross Knight travel, they run into an armed knight who is galloping towards them quickly, seemingly on the run from some enemy. When the Redcross Knight approaches the other knight (Sir Trevisan) and asks what's the matter, the knight takes a while to come to his senses. At first, Sir Trevisan would prefer not to say what's troubling him, but he eventually agrees to speak after the Redcross Knight reassures him that he's out of danger.

The poem has already established that helping fair maidens is an important part of chivalry, and this section helps establish that helping fellow knights in need is equally important. Sir Trevisan seems to be a virtuous knight, though not one nearly as strong as Redcross or Arthur.

Sir Trevisan speaks about how he used to keep company with a knight named Sir Terwin, who was a brave knight but who was unhappy because he loved a lady who was too proud to love him back. As Trevisan and Terwin rode away from the lady, they ran into a man called Despair who asked them who they were and what they'd been doing.

Like Error, Despair is another monstrous figure with a very literal name. Fittingly, the things that Despair does to brave knights are similar to what despair (the emotion) would do to them.

Sir Trevisan continues telling the story of how Despair listened to Trevisan and Terwin's stories, then provided a rope to Trevisan and a rusty knife to Terwin, trying to persuade them both to kill themselves. Terwin did kill himself, but Trevisan was so afraid that he rode off at once. He believes he will keep riding and never know rest after seeing Despair, but he agrees to lead the Redcross Knight to Despair's dwelling place.

Just as despair can lead to suicide, so too does Despair lead knights to suicide. Like some of the medieval texts that inspired it, The Faerie Queene *often includes allegories that can be read as very literal advice for how to live a virtuous life or how to avoid living an unvirtuous one.*

Sir Trevisan leads the Redcross Knight and the others to a cave that's so dark it resembles a grave. The Redcross Knight enters the cave and sees Despair sitting on the ground in the blood of Sir Terwin, with long, greasy hair and ragged clothes with thorns in them.

The grave-like appearance of Despair's lair highlights how dangerous despair can be. The monster sits in the blood of his victim, providing a visceral image of how Despair is a killer.

The Redcross Knight confronts Despair, saying that he should pay a price in his own blood for what he did to Sir Terwin. Despair, however, argues that what he did to Terwin was just and that now Terwin gets to enjoy eternal rest. According to Despair, a long life just gives more opportunity for sin, and more sin leads to a greater punishment after death.

Despair's arguments here are meant to sound convincing, even though many readers probably know that Redcross will ultimately win this encounter. When evil is powerful, it makes the victory of the hero all the more meaningful.

Despair suggests that the Redcross Knight himself should lie down and take a rest so that he can be free from fear, sickness, sorrow, pain, and other difficult parts of life. He says that surely the Redcross Knight must have already heard death calling to him when he was locked up in the dungeon. He asks why the Redcross Knight would prolong the day of his death when surely, he has already built up a heaping pile of sins that he'll have to account for on the day of judgement.

Despair is relentless in his arguments, just as real despair tends to hound people. Despite the Redcross Knight's immense holiness, he is in a weakened state after his long stay in Orgoglio's dungeon, and this makes him particularly vulnerable to the words of Despair.

Despair lists some of the Redcross Knight's specific sins, such as the way he was false with Una and instead chose to serve the evil Duessa. Despair says it's God's law that sinners should die, and so it is better that the Redcross Knight kill himself willingly and finally end his sorrows.

Despair uses Redcross's own flaws against him. From a certain logic, his argument that Redcross is a sinner does seem to make sense, even if it's not ultimately true. Christian teaching would counsel Redcross to repent of his sins, not put himself in God's place by ending his own life through suicide.

The Redcross Knight is moved by Despair's words and thinks back on all the sins he's committed, quaking. Despair sees that his words have weakened the knight. As the Redcross Knight sees death ahead of him, Despair brings out swords, ropes, poison, and fire for the knight to use against himself. Instead, however, the knight takes a dagger that he already has and holds it out in a trembling hand.

Interestingly, Despair isn't a monster that kills his victims outright but rather a monster that leads the victims to kill themselves. The objects that Despair provides for Redcross all have a clear connection to suicide. Redcross chooses the dagger, which would traditionally be stabbed through the heart, suggesting how his despair is related to how he treated Una.

Just as the Redcross Knight is about to strike himself with his dagger, however, Una comes in and grabs it, throwing it down. She asks if he is really still the same knight who is able to slay a dragon in battle, then advises him not to listen to Despair's words. She reassures him that heaven is merciful, then tells him that he must get out of Despair's cave at once.

Una, despite her physical weakness, is a powerful force of faith, and here her strong faith literally saves Redcross's life. Although the poem is perhaps ultimately sexist in the way it portrays most women as weak or conniving, there are exceptional characters and moments, like this one, that complicate this portrayal.

The Redcross Knight rises up and gets ready to leave. When Despair realizes that he's lost his power over the knight, he tries to hang himself with a rope. But Despair has tried to kill himself before, and no matter how many times he tries, death never comes.

It is darkly ironic that Despair leads knights to commit suicide but he can't commit suicide himself no matter how many times he tries.

BOOK I: CANTO X

The narrator suggests that humans shouldn't be vain because all their strength and bravery come directly from God.

The narrator's brief comments emphasize once again how important holiness is to this first book.

Una sees that the Redcross Knight is feeble after his long imprisonment in the dungeon, and so she tries to bring him back to his former good health. She takes him to a holy house to recover.

The Redcross Knight's physical weakness represents his spiritual weakness as well, and so a holy house provides a way to cure both ailments.

At the holy house, Dame Cœlia has three daughters: Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa. The house has also seen many distinguished guests like Humility, Zeal, and Reverence. When Dame Cœlia sees Una, she embraces her and declares that she must be an innocent, virtuous person. Dame Cœlia marvels at the presence of the Redcross Knight, saying that it's rare to see a knight in their house and that many prefer to stay on the main road or go astray, with few taking the narrow path towards the holy house.

In addition to monsters with literal names, the poem also includes positive characters with literal names. The names Humility, Zeal, and Reverence all suggest a faith in God that things will work out, something that the Redcross Knight lacked during his encounter with Despair and so something that he could use more of.

Una tells Dame Cœlia that she and the Redcross Knight have come to see Dame Cœlia and praise her. Dame Cœlia responds by showing them every courtesy. She introduces Fidelia and Speranza, who are both virgins and who have many good qualities. They come out and have pleasant conversation with Una. Una asks about their sister Charissa, but she is married and resting after the recent birth of a son.

Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa all have names related to the words "faith," "hope," and "charity." Faith, hope, and charity (or sometimes love) are three virtues that are often mentioned together and sometimes called the theological virtues. They are highlighted in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 13.

Dame Cœlia addresses the Redcross Knight and says she knows he must be exhausted after his many labors, and so he should rest. Once the knight's body has begun to heal, Una suggests that the knight should go to the schoolhouse where Fidelia teaches, where the Redcross Knight can learn some heavenly wisdom. The knight attends, and Fidelia gives lessons from a holy book written in blood that only she is able to teach from. Her words are powerful, and the knight grows from hearing them.

The activities that the Redcross Knight takes part in during his stay at the holy house are all metaphors for how a person can strengthen their faith. It's noteworthy that so many of Redcross's activities center on reading or study, since Protestants place a greater emphasis on personal reading of the Bible (whereas Catholics place more emphasis on following Biblical interpretation by church authorities).

The Redcross Knight still regrets to remember all his past sins, so Speranza tries to comfort him with her sweet wisdom. She teaches him how to take hold of himself so that he won't become so distressed by his sins that he wants to die.

Speranza (who is identified with hope) gives Redcross the hope that one day his sins will no longer bother him as they currently do.

Dame Cœlia also advises the Redcross Knight with her wise counsel. With the help of Patience, she shows the knight how to endure his pain. Nevertheless, the root cause of the knight's sorrow—the corruption within him—is slower to heal.

Patience, like Speranza, helps the Redcross Knight understand that in addition to healing his spiritual wounds, learning how to live with them might be just as important.

The Redcross Knight tries to overcome his sin by wearing a sackcloth and fasting. He prays early in the day and late in the day. Penance disciplines him with an iron whip, Remorse pricks him to let blood out, and Repentance puts his body in saltwater that inflames his wounds in order to wash away his sin. In a relatively short period of time, the feeble knight is back to good health.

The actions the Redcross Knight takes here have long been associated with repentance, and many, like the wearing of sackcloth, are depicted in the Bible. The Redcross Knight's quick physical recovery shows how physical and spiritual health are closely linked.

Una pities the Redcross Knight when she sees the anguish he's in, but seeing his cleaner conscience makes her kiss him and cherish him even more. She brings the knight to Charissa, who has finally recovered enough from childbirth to see visitors. Charissa is beautiful and graceful, and she has many babies that hang sucking nourishment from her breasts, which she sends away once they are old enough.

Unlike many of the virtuous women in the poem, Charissa isn't a virgin. Instead, she's a very maternal figure. Her extensive generosity toward her children reflects the fact that her name is connected to the word "charity."

Una and the Redcross Knight wish Charissa and her children well, and she is happy to host the two of them. Una asks Charissa to teach the Redcross Knight in her ways. She takes the knight's hand, and says Charissa must teach him all about love, righteousness, and doing the right thing, while also teaching him how to avoid wrath.

Charissa's status as a mother suggests that perhaps she is the most mature out of the three sisters, and so it makes sense that her lesson is the last step on Redcross's journey to becoming spiritually stronger.

A very old matron named Mercy also helps the Redcross Knight in his education. She helps him when he has to go through narrow passages covered in thorns.

Redcross and the other holy knights often show a strength in battle that seems to be the opposite of mercy, but there are a few key moments in the poem where a virtuous knight realizes that it is best to show mercy to an opponent.

In the holy house there are also seven Bead-men, who have all pledged their lives to serving God. The first is the leader, the second is the almner (who provides food and drink), the third keeps the wardrobe and provides clothes, the fourth gives aid to prisoners, the fifth attends to the sick, the sixth is in charge of the dead, and the seventh cares for orphans and widows.

The seven Bead-men are the opposite of the seven deadly sins in the house of pride. Characters in the poem are often mirrored, with virtuous characters having evil counterparts and vice-versa.

When the Redcross Knight arrives, the first of the Bead-men welcomes him. He spends some time with them, and also with Mercy, and by the end he becomes almost perfect in his righteousness. Eventually, the Redcross Knight goes with Mercy up to a hermitage where an old man named Contemplation lives.

The time that Redcross spends with the Bead-men helps counteract the time he spent in the House of Pride, which, fittingly, happened shortly before his fall to the giant Orgoglio that led to his weakened state.

Old Contemplation is full of grace, and though he is blind and frail, he moves quickly. Contemplation is annoyed at first to have visitors because it means he has to put aside his heavenly thoughts. Mercy tells him that they have come for the highest purpose: to try to help the Redcross Knight attain heaven.

Though Contemplation is virtuous, he's not without his flaws, since he can get distracted. In the poem, virtues can slip into vice when applied in the wrong way.

Contemplation tells the Redcross Knight that he is his own best guide for getting into heaven. Contemplation leads the knight to a tall mountain like the one that Moses once climbed in the Old Testament, or perhaps like Mount Parnassus, where the Muses lived. In the distance is a city with high walls and towers, protecting wonders inside that can't even be described in earthly words.

Contemplation naturally believes that Redcross's best course of action is to think things over for himself. The great city he shows to the Redcross Knight represents how contemplation can lead people to amazing discoveries.

Contemplation tells the Redcross Knight that the splendid city he sees is Jerusalem, where God's chosen people live. The Redcross Knight says he used to think that Cleopolis, where the Faerie Queene reigned, was the fairest city he'd ever seen, but he now knows Jerusalem is fairer.

Attempting to take Jerusalem was an integral part of the Crusades, and the city holds enormous symbolic significance in Protestantism, too, as both the historic and heavenly abode of God's people.

Contemplation says that the Redcross Knight must seek a path towards Jerusalem. The knight protests that he is unworthy of such glory. He also does not want to have to turn his attention back to earthly affairs.

Jerusalem, which is presented here as a mythical perfect city, can also be read as a stand-in for heaven.

Contemplation says he knows that the Redcross Knight is descended from the race of the Saxon kings of Britain. Soon after birth, a faerie took him away and raised him in faerie land.

Virtuous characters in the poem often descend from royal blood, reflecting ideas about morality common at the time, and of course flattering nobles like Queen Elizabeth who might happen to read the poem.

The Redcross Knight thanks Contemplation for all that he has done for him. He returns to Una and is happy to see her. They then go back to see Dame Cœlia and her daughters.

Although Contemplation has important things to show Redcross, ultimately, he must leave contemplation behind and take what he's learned back to the real world.

BOOK I: CANTO XI

Una thinks of her parents, the King and Queen, who are still in their castle, captive to a dragon, and so she tells the Redcross Knight that they must ride in that direction. When they get there, they hear a hideous roaring sound from the dragon. The Redcross Knight asks Una to stand aside, so that he can go into battle. The narrator calls upon a muse as well as on Mars, the god of war, as he prepares to tell of the upcoming battle.

The narrator's mention of Mars helps set up what will be the climactic final battle of the first book. It might seem early in the poem for such a climactic moment, but in fact, each of the six books has a largely self-contained story, even if many characters and events do carry over from book to book.

The dragon speeds toward the Redcross Knight. It is armored with seemingly impenetrable scales and has giant wings like sails. Its tail, claws, and jaw are dangerous, and its eyes burn with anger. The creature is so fearsome that even the Redcross Knight almost quakes.

The dragon is the most fearsome foe that Redcross has faced so far, and so it will be the ultimate test of the new virtues he learned at the house of the holy.

Despite his fear, the Redcross Knight readies his spear and rides toward the dragon, trying to impale it, but he can't pierce its hard hide, and he and his horse are knocked to the ground.

The beginning of the battle demonstrates that standard fighting tactics won't be enough to slay such a powerful beast.

The dragon spreads its wings and lifts off the ground. It takes the Redcross Knight and his horse with it as it flies before coming back down. Once it's down, the knight strikes a blow that glances off the dragon's neck but pierces under its wing. The wound lets out a whole river of blood—enough to power a water-mill.

Redcross lands a serious blow on the dragon, demonstrating how he learned well at the house of the holy and is no longer the weakened knight who got humbled by Orgoglio. Spenser often uses vivid imagery to describe gore, as he does here with the watermill of blood coming out of the dragon.

The dragon gets ready to blow fire. The Redcross Knight attempts to strike another blow, but this one doesn't even leave a mark on the dragon, frustrating the knight. Suddenly the dragon breathes out its fire, burning the Redcross Knight under his armor. The knight takes off his armor and helmet.

Despite Redcross's early advantage, however, the dragon proves that it won't go down easily. The loss of Redcross's armor suggests that he has nothing left to protect him, except perhaps his faith.

The Redcross Knight is so wounded and exhausted that he feels like he wants to die. Luckily, the well of life is nearby, a miraculous well that can bring the dead to life and undo decay. The knight is thrown back and falls into the well. Seeing the knight go into the well, the dragon believes it has won.

As it does elsewhere in the poem, water provides a miraculous, healing function here. Just as the waters of baptism wash sin away, the waters of the well here will wash Redcross's wounds away.

Una watches everything from a distance in dismay. At last, however, the next morning she sees the Redcross Knight come out of the well, looking reborn. The dragon can't believe what it sees. The knight hits the dragon right on the scalp, leaving a big wound and dazing it.

Both the dragon and Una assume that Redcross has lost, showing how it can look at times like evil has won when in fact virtue is still fighting. Redcross comes back with a powerful attack to prove he's even stronger after being fortified by the miraculous water.

The narrator wonders whether the Redcross Knight's blade was strengthened in the well. In any case, the wound enrages the dragon. The dragon uses its tail to sting the knight's shoulder, where it gets stuck. Remembering his honor, however, the Redcross Knight doesn't let the wound stop him and instead chops off the dragon's tail, leaving only a stump.

The Redcross Knight begins to weaken the dragon. While lopping off its tail isn't nearly as significant as lopping off its head, it nevertheless shows that Redcross has begun to reduce the dragon's power.

The dragon is enraged again. It springs up, then grips onto the Redcross Knight's **shield**. The knight tries to pry the shield away but isn't strong enough. The knight strikes at the joint of the dragon's foot, hewing it off, but it still hangs on to the shield.

The dragon recognizes that the shield is the source of Redcross's power, and so it tries to pry it away, but Redcross is so strong in his faith (which the shield represents) that the dragon can't tear it away.

Even more angry, the dragon spews out more flames. The Redcross Knight falls back, and even with God's guidance on his side, he stumbles down. Fortunately, the tree of life (the blessed tree from the Garden of Eden) has a stream of Balm coming out of it like a well, and the knight falls into this stream. Like the well from earlier, the stream gives life and saves the knight from death.

The flames of the dragon are perhaps representative of the torturous fires of hell. Even someone as strong as Redcross can be hurt by the full force of the dragon. At the same time, however, Redcross's faith seems to ensure that there will always be a conveniently located healing stream wherever he falls.

Night falls, and the dragon leaves the Redcross Knight alone for the moment. Una is again worried about her champion, but his wounds are being healed, and by the next morning, the knight rises up again, fully restored.

The many ups and downs of the Redcross Knight resemble a passion play, a medieval Christian ritual which reenacts how Jesus suffered and even died before ultimately being resurrected.

The dragon is waiting for the Redcross Knight, dismayed to see him looking healthy but still too full of rage to give up the fight. The dragon tries to swallow the knight whole, but the knight takes the opportunity to run his sword right into the dragon's mouth.

The mouth is the source of the dragon's fire, and by extension all its power, so it is fitting that the mouth is where Redcross strikes his final blow that slays the dragon for good.

The dragon falls and dies, letting out clouds of smoke. The Redcross Knight and Una both tremble at how big the dragon looks as it falls. Una warns not to approach the dragon in case it's still alive, but it doesn't stir, and so finally she prays in thanks to God and also thanks her knight.

Even in death, the dragon looks fearsome, suggesting how powerful it truly was in life. Nevertheless, the smoke that emits from the dragon reveals that it has lost its power to spew flame and is now harmless.

BOOK I: CANTO XII

The narrator says that he can see a safe journey's end for Una and the Redcross Knight. At the castle, a watchman calls out that the dragon is dead. As the news sounds, the doors of the castle gate, which have long been closed, are finally opened again. The old King and Queen come down in their royal robes, prostrating themselves before the Redcross Knight while laurels are thrown at him.

Though the climax of Book I has passed, there are still some plot threads to resolve, including what happened to Una's parents, the king and queen of Eden.

Children play, and maidens make music in celebration. As Una watches them, she seems like the goddess Diana in the forest with her nymphs. A crowd of people gathers around the Redcross Knight in admiration, though they are afraid of getting too close to the dragon's corpse, with some even thinking they see it move its eyes.

The celebratory nature of the final canto of the book reveals how, when one person like the Redcross Knight becomes holier, it can have a ripple effect that makes things better for everyone around him.

The King bestows fine gifts of gold and ivory upon the Redcross Knight, then after embracing his daughter, Una, they all go into the palace. The inside is richly decorated and there is a feast with all kinds of different foods and drinks.

Unlike with Orgoglio, there is no blood of innocents in this wealthy castle, suggesting that its wealth is the just reward of a life lived virtuously.

The King and Queen listen with interest to the Redcross Knight's retelling of his journey, feeling pity for all the misfortune he had to endure. The King says that now that the knight has survived all his ordeals, they should make plans for him to rest. The knight, however, says he can't rest because of his faith—he must return to the Faerie Queene and serve her for six more years in her war against a pagan king.

The pagan king may correspond to Philip in Spain, who was an enemy of England at the time. Despite or perhaps because of her infallible virtue, the Faerie Queene seems to always have enemies somewhere in the world that she needs her knights to take care of.

The King and the Redcross Knight decide that once the knight's six remaining years of service are up, he'll come back to marry Una. The king calls Una in, and she appears as bright as a morning star and as fresh as a flower in May.

Redcross's devotion to Una is one of his highest purposes, and yet his devotion to the Faerie Queene is even higher priority, emphasizing how important duty was to knights in his time.

But just as Una arrives, a messenger rushes into the hall. He has a message for the King, telling him not to let his daughter marry the Redcross Knight because the knight is already betrothed to another: Fidessa (the disguised form of the witch Duessa).

Just when the book seems to be over, however, one final complication turns up to potentially ruin Redcross and Una's future happiness.

The King asks what this message means. The Redcross Knight explains how the witch Duessa used her magic to trick him into betraying Una. Una steps forward to say that she already knows about Duessa and that she also knows that the Redcross Knight is so pained by his mistakes that he almost wanted to die. Una explains that the messenger is yet another one of Duessa's tricks.

By this point in the story, however, evil has already been soundly defeated, and so this last obstacle comes across as pathetic and desperate, emphasizing how far the forces of evil have fallen over the course of the book.

The King is moved by Una's words, and he angrily has the messenger locked up in the dungeon. They decide that preparations should begin at once for the wedding of the Redcross Knight and Una, with the King himself performing the ceremony. The palace fills with angelic music and frankincense.

The wedding of Redcross and Una faces no further delays and represents the end of the long journeys each of them endured to reach this point.

The day of the wedding between the Redcross Knight and Una is joyful for everyone. Still, despite his joy, the knight remembers his promise to return to the Faerie Queene. Shortly after the wedding he does so, leaving Una to mourn his absence. The narrator says that this part of the story is like when sailors land to drop off some of their passengers before speeding on to finish their journey.

The ending of Book I establishes that despite the sense of finality in this canto, there is still plenty of story left to tell, and even the Redcross Knight's own journey isn't yet complete, given the oath of duty that he's pledged to the Faerie Queene.

BOOK II: PROEM

The narrator admits that he doesn't know where faerie land is exactly, but he talks about other regions that were recently discovered like Peru, the Amazon, and Virginia. He says that he'll now tell the story of a good Faerie knight called Sir Guyon.

The setting of the poem is deliberately a little obscure, mixing elements of fantasy and history. Here, the narrator basically just tells the reader not to worry about it, since lots of new places get discovered all the time.

BOOK II: CANTO I

With the Redcross Knight returned to faerie land and Una living happily in Eden waiting for him, Archimago begins plotting his next move. But Redcross is used to Archimago's tricks by now and isn't fooled. Because Archimago just wants to do evil and doesn't care specifically who he affects, he turns his attention to a new knight that he happens to meet: Sir Guyon.

This first canto of the second book establishes the poem's structure. While the books all tell a continuous story with many returning characters, the events are episodic, and the focus changes to a new character with each new book.

Like the Redcross Knight, Sir Guyon is elfin, and he has come traveling to faerie land with King Oberon and a Palmer (pilgrim on a religious trip). Archimago disguises himself as a squire and approaches them politely to try to deceive them. He tells them that he witnessed a so-called knight attacking a maiden nearby. Sir Guyon is angry and goes off to seek the evil knight at once.

As a villainous character, Archimago can't change and can't help going back to his evil ways, so even after his lack of success with the Redcross Knight, he simply decides to look for a new victim. While some evil characters like the dragon are feared for their strength, Archimago's power is his ability to trick people.

They arrive and find a lady with her clothing torn and hair disheveled. When Sir Guyon tries to approach her, she only becomes more upset. At last, the woman begins talking about how she was betrayed by someone she trusted. She gives a description of the Redcross Knight. Sir Guyon is surprised because he has heard of the Redcross Knight and believes him to be righteous. It turns out this lady is in fact the evil sorceress Duessa, once again in disguise.

Reputation is important for all the knights in the poem. Knights who don't follow the code of chivalry risk acquiring a bad reputation, while knights with a history of noble actions often achieve a level of fame for their heroic deeds.

Archimago and Duessa met up while Duessa was wandering naked in the woods after being defeated in the previous book. Eventually, using their disguises, they convince Sir Guyon to come with them to find the Redcross Knight.

Duessa seems to be unable to change and immediately goes back to her old ways, even after being shown mercy. The poem returns to the concepts of mercy and justice several times, raising the question of when justice should be more lenient and when it should be harsh.

Archimago provokes Sir Guyon to try attacking the Redcross Knight, but soon the two knights begin to talk. The Redcross Knight says he knows Sir Guyon is noble and that they have no quarrel. The old Palmer arrives and also says that Sir Guyon should have no reason to fight with the pious Redcross Knight. Guyon and Redcross pledge loyalty to each other, then Sir Guyon rides off with the Palmer.

As an old, holy man, the Palmer is not just a physical guide for Sir Guyon on his journey but also a spiritual guide. The previous book showed how even a knight as righteous as the Redcross Knight needed instruction from those with more experience in various virtues, and in this book, Guyon will grow from his relationship with the Palmer.

One day during his travels, Sir Guyon comes across the unusual scene of a woman (Amavia) covered in blood with a knife in her body and a happy baby playing in the blood near her lap. Next to them is the corpse of a dead knight. Sir Guyon pulls the knife out and manages to treat the woman's wounds. He asks what happened to her.

New obstacles often arise in the poem without warning. Amavia has no connection to the events of the previous book and will start Sir Guyon off on a new adventure, since knights always help strangers they meet on the road, particularly women in distress.

Amavia says she wishes she could just die. At last, however, she begins to tell the story of Sir Mordant, a gentle knight that she loved (and who is the corpse beside her). Sir Mordant's misfortune began when he met a false sorceress named Acrasia. Acrasia lured men to an island where she made them drunk with pleasure so that she could use them for her evil purposes.

Like Duessa, Acrasia is another tricky witch whose only goal in life seems to be luring men to their death. In a poem like The Faerie Queene *that is so obsessed with the concept of chastity, it makes sense that the villains take the form of women who don't follow the rules of chastity.*

Amavia disguised herself as a pilgrim to sneak onto Acrasia's island and try to find Sir Mordant. She found him enchanted by Acrasia's evil charms. Amavia thought she could save Sir Mordant by taking him away, but when they left, he died the first time he drank water from a well. This is the end of Amavia's story, and she dies soon afterwards, having seemingly stabbed herself in her grief. This moves Sir Guyon to tears.

Water returns as a symbol of purity. Here, however, Sir Mordant has been so hopelessly corrupted by Acrasia's influence that when he tries to purify himself with real, uncontaminated water, his body rejects it and he dies.

Sir Guyon laments to the Palmer about how humans are mortal. He wants to bury Amavia and Sir Mordant, but the Palmer disagrees and says that temperance is important, so their burial should be left up to God. But eventually Sir Guyon convinces the Palmer to help him bury them. Guyon promises vengeance on Acrasia.

The Palmer is usually the one advising Sir Guyon, so it is noteworthy here that Guyon wins the argument. This section seems to suggest that, while the Palmer's experience should be respected, sometimes the more youthful zeal of a knight like Sir Guyon leads to a better solution.

BOOK II: CANTO II

Sir Guyon picks up the baby that was playing in Amavia's blood. He tries to clean the orphan off but is surprised to find that the blood clings to the baby's hands. Guyon wonders why God would do this to such an innocent baby. The Palmer explains that perhaps the blood is a symbol of Amavia's innocence.

Religion is complicated in the poem because while Greek and Roman gods and goddesses literally exist in the poem's world, the Protestant God seems to also exist above everything else. The idea that God works in mysterious and even confusing ways is important to Protestantism (and many other religions as well).

Sir Guyon and the Palmer make it to a castle built on a rock by the sea where three sisters live. The three sisters pledged to divide the castle equally but frequently argue with each other about their shares. When Guyon arrives, he finds that the middle sister, Medina, is the loveliest and most striking.

Not all wealthy characters in the story are evil—for some of them, their material wealth is a symbol of their virtuousness—but frequently wealth is a sign of greed, and here it leads three sisters into conflict.

The older and younger sisters are currently courting with knights. The older sister is with a strong knight named Sir Huddibras, and the younger sister is with Sansloy (the Saracen who kidnapped Una in Book I). Both knights are brash, and so they typically battle each other to please their ladies, but Sir Guyon is a new opponent for them.

The return of the Saracen Sansloy makes it clear that these sisters—and by extension Sir Huddibras—may not be particularly virtuous. Though both Huddibras and Sansloy have the knightly quality of strength, they are brash and don't use their strength as judiciously as a better knight like Sir Guyon.

At first, Sir Guyon easily beats back the attacks by Sir Huddibras and Sansloy. Then they start a furious three-way war. Though they are fighting for their ladies, Medina doesn't actually want Guyon to fight, and she enters the fray to stop them. She gives a speech about the benefits of concord. Her words are so moving that the combatants let their weapons fall. The other two sisters pretend to be happy with this outcome, but they're not.

Sir Guyon embodies the virtue of temperance (moderation and self-restraint), but he can still be drawn into a fight, particularly since this is still near the beginning of the book and he still has much to learn about how to truly live a temperate life as a knight. Medina, whose name suggests "middle" or "median," is the voice of temperance here, proving herself to be more reasonable than her two more extreme sisters.

Elissa, the eldest sister, scowls and won't eat. Meanwhile Perissa, the youngest, eats and drinks lavishly. In the middle sits Medina, who is dignified and eats a proper amount. Medina asks Sir Guyon where he came from, and he replies that he's been traveling in the service of the Faerie Queene, who is noble and great. He also relates the story of Amavia, Sir Mordant, and Acrasia, telling how he has vowed revenge on Acrasia. All the guests are fascinated by his story. Soon, the dinner ends, and they go to bed.

With Elissa refusing to eat, and Perissa eating greedily, the two sisters represent the different extremes, showing how each can be bad. Medina represents a proper balance between the two extremes, and so it makes sense that she gets along with Sir Guyon, the knight who represents the virtue of temperance.

BOOK II: CANTO III

The next morning, Sir Guyon gets up and decides to continue on his quest to get vengeance on Acrasia. He decides to name the orphan baby Ruddymane. Sir Guyon walks because his horse was stolen by a man named Braggadochio. Braggadochio stole the horse by boasting and pretending to be strong. The servant who was watching the horse prostrated himself before Braggadochio and begged for mercy. His name is Trompart. Now Braggadochio forces Trompart to serve him.

Unlike the first book of the poem, which for the most part focused on the two heroes Redcross and Una, later books follow a wider range of perspectives. In some cantos, this even includes villains, as it does here with the horse thief Braggadochio, whose very name suggests that he is a proud character, far from the temperate personality of Sir Guyon.

In their travels, Braggadochio and Trompart run into Archimago. Archimago figures Braggadochio must be a grand knight who would be familiar with the Redcross Knight and Sir Guyon. Archimago decides to try to plant the rumor that Redcross and Guyon murdered Sir Mordant. At hearing this, Braggadochio acts enraged and threatens death on those two knights.

While both the Redcross Knight and Sir Guyon resisted the tricks of Archimago earlier in the book, Braggadochio is a much less righteous character, and so he is also much more vulnerable to falling for Archimago's deceptive words.

Archimago advises Braggadochio to get a proper sword in order to slay the Redcross Knight and Sir Guyon, but Braggadochio brags that he doesn't need a sword. Archimago insists that he will get Prince Arthur's powerful sword and give it to Braggadochio. He vanishes.

Braggadochio can't help being boastful. Perhaps he brags that he won't need a sword to slay the Redcross Knight and Sir Guyon because he has no intention of actually following up on his boasts and fighting them for real.

Braggadochio and Trompart set off again, and they meet a lady in hunting clothes (Belphoebe). She is fair and resembles the hunter goddess Diana. She spots Trompart and addresses him. Trompart praises the woman, saying that she is like a goddess to him. The woman almost shoots Braggadochio with her bow, seeing him move and believing him to be an animal, but Trompart stops her. Braggadochio is also wowed by the woman.

Diana was a famously virginal hunting goddess, so it is safe to assume that the chaste Belphoebe is virtuous and perhaps another character inspired by Queen Elizabeth. Characters in the poem who are associated with nature and forests are often (although not always) virtuous.

Braggadochio is filled with lust and tries to grab the woman, but she fends him off with her javelin. She flees. Trompart suggests that to avoid trouble, they should just let the woman go, but Braggadochio says he isn't afraid of her. They continue their journey.

Braggadochio can admire the beauty of virtuous women like Belphoebe, but he lacks the temperance to control himself around them, and this is what separates him from Sir Guyon.

BOOK II: CANTO IV

Sir Guyon and the Palmer continue on their search for the horse that Guyon rightfully owns. As they travel, they come across a man with many wounds who seems to be insane and who is cruelly dragging another young man by the hair. Behind him is an old hag in dirty robes who provokes the wounded man with her words. Guyon tries to save the dragged man by shoving the woman away, but the wounded man gets angry and starts attacking in every direction. The wounded man is Furor, and the old hag (his mother) is Occasion.

The gruesome appearance of Furor and Occasion reflects the awfulness of the vices they represent. Occasion may seem like an innocuous word, but here it mostly means "occasion to start a fight," which is why Occasion is here paired with Furor. Both characters represent the opposite of the virtue of temperance.

Sir Guyon restrains Occasion and stops her from talking, but Furor tries to run away, so Guyon goes after him. He binds Furor with 100 iron chains and 100 knots, but still Furor gnashes his teeth and seethes. With Furor captive, Guyon goes to the young man who is injured from being dragged by Furor.

It's significant that Furor and Occasion's prisoner is a young man, since youth is often associated with rashness (which is a form of lack of temperance).

The injured man tells Sir Guyon that his troubles began with a false squire who pretended to be his friend named Philemon. The young man was in love with a fair lady named Claribell and was preparing to marry her. While Philemon acted like he was happy, one day he approached the young man and told him his lady had been unfaithful, making the young man jealous.

The story the injured young man tells Sir Guyon centers on the topic of youthly passion. All of the characters in the story act in bold, dramatic ways that reflect the rashness of youth.

Philemon arranges a trick where he pretends to be with Claribell, when in fact it's just another woman wearing Claribell's clothes. The young man slays the real Claribell before learning the truth. When he does, he poisons Philemon and almost kills the false Claribell, but while chasing after her, he gets caught by Furor and Occasion. Now the young man feels so bad that he wants to die.

In this story, the rashness and passion of everyone involved ends up having deadly consequences. The young man kills quickly, without thinking. He represents a sort of cautionary tale for what can happen to men who don't have the same level of temperance as Sir Guyon.

Sir Guyon suggests that the young man could have avoided his problems through temperance. The Palmer agrees that he should learn to control his emotions.

Characters in the poem sometimes state the themes directly, as Sir Guyon and the Palmer do here when they speak in praise of temperance.

Just then, a varlet (a type of servant) with a **shield** that reads "Burnt I do burne" begins riding toward them. The varlet, whose name is Atin, warns Sir Guyon to leave the area at once since a deadly knight named Pyrochles will soon be arriving. Pyrochles has come to seek Occasion.

Both Pyrochles's name and his shield suggest that he is associated with the element of fire. Fire contrasts with the purifying water that appears throughout the poem, and it also represents passion—the opposite of Sir Guyon's temperance.

The Palmer suggests that Pyrochles is mad to seek out Occasion, who causes strife and even comes to those who aren't looking for her. Sir Guyon suggests that Atin pass this message on to Pyrochles, but Atin gets defiant and says that Pyrochles will come and make them bleed. Atin throws a dart that bounces off Sir Guyon's **shield**, then he flees.

As a fiery, passionate knight, Pyrochles actively seeks out Occasion. This means that he's the sort of person who's always looking for a fight—appropriate for someone whose whole personality is associated with fire.

BOOK II: CANTO V

Not long after Atin flees, Pyrochles sees Sir Guyon making his way across the plain. Without even greeting Sir Guyon, Pyrochles rides ahead to attack, although it doesn't hurt Sir Guyon. Guyon responds by striking back, and the blow glances off Pyrochles but decapitates his horse, meaning they are now both on foot.

It's no surprise that the hot-headed Pyrochles picks a fight with Sir Guyon at the first available opportunity. His decision to fight before even greeting Sir Guyon shows his rashness as well as his lack of respect for typical conduct among knights.

Pyrochles calls Sir Guyon a coward for killing his innocent horse. He draws his flaming sword and strikes. Guyon is himself enraged and strikes back, leaving a bloody wound on Pyrochles's shoulder. This only makes Pyrochles angrier and makes his sword burn more ferociously, but as he strikes wildly, Guyon is able to keep fending him off until Pyrochles is breathless.

Although Pyrochles is the one who attacked Sir Guyon first, he still blames Guyon for killing his horse. He only gets angrier as the battle goes on, showing how, once indulged, passion and rage often just continue to grow stronger.

When Pyrochles stops to catch his breath, Sir Guyon pursues him and forces him to cry for mercy. Being temperate, Guyon agrees to let the knight go. He tells Pyrochles that he shouldn't be angry about being defeated. Pyrochles said he heard Guyon had been doing terrible things to an old woman named Occasion, but Guyon just smiles and explains how Occasion and Furor try to stir up strife wherever they go.

Despite enduring the unprovoked attacks and insults of Pyrochles, Sir Guyon doesn't lose his own cool. As it turns out, Pyrochles has simply been misled by his passion and is perhaps not as fundamentally evil as some of the other villains in the story, which explains why Guyon shows him mercy.

Pyrochles ignores Sir Guyon's advice and unties Occasion, but he soon finds himself being attacked by Furor. He calls to Sir Guyon to help him, and Guyon is moved with pity, but the Palmer suggests that Guyon should avoid intervening so that Pyrochles learns his lesson. Guyon and the Palmer leave. Meanwhile, Atin is watching from a distance and thinks Guyon has struck Pyrochles down, so Atin runs off to tell Pyrochles's brother, Cymochles.

Even after being shown mercy, Pyrochles refuses to listen to reason. This time, however, the only victim is himself, since he's the one who ends up getting attacked by Furor. Although Sir Guyon asks about intervening, the Palmer convinces him not to, suggesting that while mercy is virtuous, sometimes justice also involves punishment.

Cymochles is a mighty knight who has won glory in many perilous fights. His lady is the evil sorceress Acrasia (the same one Sir Guyon has been searching for to avenge Amavia). When Atin arrives, he finds Cymochles in a pleasant grove, surrounded by a flock of fair damsels who are all trying to win his attention. Atin scolds Cymochles for becoming weak from pleasure.

The name of Cymochles is similar to Pyrochles and suggests that they share some traits in common. In particular, they share their willingness to easily start fights. Although Acrasia ensnares many otherwise good knights, Cymochles seems to be with her by choice, and so he supports her tricky ways (although this section shows he isn't necessarily faithful to her).

Atin pricks Cymochles with a dart, which seems to wake him up from a dream. He gets up hastily and vows to seek vengeance against the man who struck down Pyrochles (who Atin mistakenly believes was killed by Sir Guyon, but who has not actually been struck down).

Like the story of Philemon and Claribell earlier, the passionate Cymochles makes a rash decision based on incorrect information that could end up having deadly consequences.

BOOK II: CANTO VI

With his wrath having been kindled by Atin's story, Cymochles rides forth to find Sir Guyon. He is distracted, however, when he sees a ship carrying a lovely lady going by. The lady on the ship allows Cymochles to visit her, but not Atin. Her name is Phaedria, and she entertains Cymochles with humorous flirtation.

Cymochles seems to be unusually susceptible to being distracted by pleasure—which makes sense if his lady is Acrasia, who thrives on using pleasure to tempt and trap men.

Phaedria takes Cymochles in her ship to an island full of beautiful flowers and other vegetation. Phaedria asks Cymochles why such a noble knight must always be seeking dangerous adventure when instead he could be enjoying pleasure. She lures him into a deep sleep.

The beautiful island that Phaedria takes Cymochles to foreshadows Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, since both are places that dull knights' senses with pleasure.

Phaedria leaves Cymochles on the island and goes off on her boat again. This time, she finds Sir Guyon. She persuades Guyon to leave behind the Palmer, which he does reluctantly. When Guyon sees where Phaedria is taking him in her boat, however, he protests that she has misled him. Phaedria says that at sea you can't always go where you want because of the tides and winds, and so she has chosen a new way that will be safer.

Even the temperate Sir Guyon is capable of being tempted in the right circumstances. Notably, Sir Guyon doesn't go to the island until he's been persuaded to leave the Palmer behind. The Palmer has acted as a guide for Guyon thus far—something like a conscience—and so without him, Guyon is more vulnerable to being tempted.

Sir Guyon puts aside his discontent for the moment. When they reach the island, Phaedria shows him all the island's sweet, natural pleasures, and though the knight goes along with it, he remains wary and tries to keep his desires in check.

In this section, Guyon is tempted, although he doesn't totally lose his temperate personality—here, it causes him to be cautious when he first gets off the boat.

Cymochles wakes up, and as he walks around the island, he sees Sir Guyon with Phaedria. He immediately flies into a rage and lunges at him to start a fight. The two both fight fiercely with their swords; Cymochles has never met an opponent as fierce as Guyon before. Phaedria sees that there is a real chance of someone getting seriously injured, so she steps between them and asks them to stop.

Like Pyrochles, Cymochles is filled with a passionate desire to start fights, even in cases where it doesn't make sense. Despite his own temperance, Sir Guyon rarely turns down a challenge, just as he got drawn into fighting at the castle of the three sisters earlier.

Phaedria goes on to say that if Cymochles and Sir Guyon really want to fight for her, they should leave aside bloody battles and fight for Venus instead of for Mars. The knights are moved by her pleasing words and stop. Guyon asks to leave the island, and Phaedria reluctantly accepts.

Phaedria wants the knights to succumb to the island's pleasure, but her words have the accidental effect of returning Sir Guyon to his senses. The fact that he can simply leave whenever he asks suggests that the other knights on the island are trapped by their own desires.

After taking Phaedria's boat back, Sir Guyon is spotted by Atin, who still believes Guyon killed Pyrochles and who shouts insults at him, but Guyon just keeps going. Soon after, Atin is shocked to see a reckless knight charging in his direction and realizes it is in fact Pyrochles, who is alive after all.

Sir Guyon's brief trip to Phaedria's island has fortified his own temperance, and he is about to witness the consequences that Pyrochles will face for not doing the same.

Pyrochles seems to be trying to drown himself by leaping into a lake and he shouts that he is burning. He says only death can quench the flame. Atin goes into the water to try to stop his master from drowning. As Atin is struggling, he looks ashore and happens to see Archimago, whom he asks for help.

Pyrochles let his fiery passion consume him, and now his punishment is to feel as if he is literally being consumed by flame.

Pyrochles tells Archimago that Furor is the one who made him burn with unquenchable flames. Archimago knows this pain well, and he agrees to use his power to cure Pyrochles of his burning condition.

Though Pyrochles previously viewed his passion as a good thing, Furor has stoked Pyrochles's passion to a level where it's uncomfortable even for him.

BOOK II: CANTO VII

Having lost contact with his guide, the Palmer, Sir Guyon tries to wander on his own and at last comes to a dismal glade. There he comes across an uncouth-looking man covered in soot whose iron coat is covered in rust. The man is surrounded by so much gold he could never spend it all. Sir Guyon asks who the man is (and if he's a man at all), and the man replies that he is Mammon.

Although Sir Guyon has overcome his first challenge of temperance on Phaedria's island, he is still missing his spiritual guide the Palmer, and this means he is still vulnerable to being tempted in various ways.

Mammon says that he is willing to give some of his enormous wealth to Sir Guyon so that he can afford whatever he wants. He boasts that he is wealthy enough to make men kings. Guyon turns him down, however, saying that riches lead to strife and that in rich kingdoms, Mammon is the one who is truly king.

Mammon is the embodiment of greed, not just in this poem but in the New Testament of the Bible as well. Here, Spenser fleshes out the Biblical figure of Mammon, adding more details and a personality.

Mammon admits that frail men are often undone by riches, but he suggests that nobler men like Sir Guyon could use riches for good. Mammon repeats that if Guyon would like some of his grace, he is free to take as much wealth from Mammon's hoard as he likes. Guyon replies, however, that even if he took some wealth and tried to hide it, he could never hide it from God.

Unlike Pyrochles, who makes no effort to explain his motives to Sir Guyon, Mammon is a conniving figure who tries to convince Sir Guyon through clever arguments. In some ways, this conversation recalls the conversation between the Redcross Knight and Despair in the first book.

Mammon and Sir Guyon walk along a plain where there's a road that continues all the way down to Pluto's kingdom in the underworld. They arrive at the door to Hell, and Mammon goes inside. Guyon follows him, and suddenly the door shuts behind him.

The door slamming shut behind Sir Guyon emphasizes how, despite Mammon's friendly tone, the ultimate goal is to trap Guyon.

Mammon shows Sir Guyon unimaginable wealth, with buildings where the walls, floor, and roof are all gold. They go through an iron door and Mammon shows Guyon a pile of riches that is equal to all the wealth in the world above. But after Mammon offers some wealth to Guyon again, Guyon repeats that he has his eyes on a greater heavenly prize. This causes Mammon to gnash his teeth in frustration.

Mammon's grand displays to Sir Guyon are meant to astonish him, but the temperate knight remains unmoved. Guyon believes that heaven is worth more than literally all the wealth on earth, and the rich imagery of this passage helps make that idea concrete.

Mammon tries to think up other schemes to catch Sir Guyon unaware. So instead of riches, he shows Guyon a fountain that Mammon claims is where all the world's good is created. Again, however, Guyon refuses, saying he already has all he needs.

Mammon is persistent and tries a different approach that he hopes will flatter his guest's taste. But Guyon remains steadfast, showing how temperance can lead to a deeper feeling of satisfaction.

Mammon doesn't give up. He takes Sir Guyon through a golden gate to a room where Disdain waits for them. He's like a king, surrounded by people from all nations. A woman in a gold chain called Ambition used to be fair but fell from grace and now tries to hide her evil ways.

This passage demonstrates how even people who might seem powerful on earth are ultimately little more than servants to Mammon and the riches that he possesses.

Mammon explains that Ambition is his daughter. She used to be called Philotime, and she was the fairest person in the world. Mammon offers Ambition to Sir Guyon as a spouse, but Guyon says he has already pledged himself to another lady.

Fittingly, Ambition was not always in the lowly state she currently occupies and seems to have been undone by her own ambition.

Mammon leads Sir Guyon now to the Garden of Proserpina, where golden apples grow. Sir Guyon is amazed at the golden apple tree. But as he climbs up a bank and looks down, he sees many damned souls below him. As Guyon looks around, he sees other figures from mythology and history like Tantalus (who was cursed to always be thirsty) and Pontius Pilate (who condemned Jesus to death).

As with previous passages, this section depicts a moment of Sir Guyon being genuinely amazed by what he sees, only to comprehend the horrors soon afterwards. This whole interlude with Mammon emphasizes that as much as wealth seems to give people power, it can also make people prisoners of Mammon in ways they don't realize.

Mammon offers Sir Guyon one of the amazing-looking golden apples. But Guyon finally decides that he's seen enough, and so he asks Mammon to lead him back into the world above. Though Mammon doesn't want to do this, he has no choice, since no living man is allowed to stay in Hell longer than Guyon has. He leads Guyon back up.

There are a couple famous golden apples in Greek and Roman mythology, and perhaps the most famous "apple" of all is the fruit in the Biblical story of Adam and Eve that the serpent uses to tempt Eve. Sir Guyon's refusal to even see the apple represents a definitive rejection of Mammon and the greed he represents.

BOOK II: CANTO VIII

While Sir Guyon has been in Hell, the Palmer has been wandering around. Suddenly, he comes across Guyon himself lying in a trance. Next to Guyon is a fair young man who looks as beautiful as the god Cupid. When the Palmer approaches the two of them, the strange young man gets up and says he has been sent by God to protect Guyon. He then flies away on his wings.

The fair young man who suddenly appears here seems to represent something like Sir Guyon's guardian angel. This retroactively explains how Sir Guyon was able to remain strong against all the various temptations he faced, even without the guidance of the wise Palmer.

The Palmer is stunned at apparently seeing an angel. He confirms that Sir Guyon is alive, and then he happens to notice that Pyrochles and Cymochles are on their way over, with Archimago and Atin as well. Pyrochles and Cymochles confront the Palmer about Guyon and all the bad things he supposedly did. They believe that Guyon is dead because he's just lying there, so they want to steal his armor. The Palmer urges them to give up their revenge, which is directed at the wrong person anyway.

Several plot threads from earlier in the book all begin to converge here. This scene sets up a clash between the forces of temperance and reason (Sir Guyon and his Palmer) vs. the forces of passion and rashness (Pyrochles, Cymochles, Atin, and Archimago). Stealing a knight's armor is dishonorable, particularly since Sir Guyon isn't dead, just in a trance.

Pyrochles and Cymochles take Sir Guyon's **shield** and helmet. Just then, they see the proudest and noblest knight in the world is coming: Arthur. Pyrochles doesn't have his own sword, since he has been using Arthur's (which Archimago procured for him), and Archimago warns him that the sword might not work against its owner. But Pyrochles seems intent on fighting Arthur with the sword anyway.

Just as he did in Book I, Arthur happens to ride in at just the moment when he's needed most. In this case, it seems as if the villains are finally paying the consequences for their rash actions, since if Archimago hadn't stolen Arthur's sword, the knight might not have come chasing them.

Arthur salutes the knights, but they don't return the greeting. The Palmer explains to Arthur how Sir Guyon isn't dead, just in a deep daze. He goes on to say how Pyrochles and Cymochles took advantage of the situation by stealing Guyon's armor. Arthur is indignant about what the two of them have done, but they only reply to Arthur by getting even angrier.

Arthur is a righteous knight, and so he is a good judge of character. Here, he isn't swayed by Pyrochles or Cymochles but instead by the wise Palmer who speaks the truth.

Pyrochles and Arthur get into a fight. Pyrochles does indeed succeed in knocking Arthur around with his own blade, but he doesn't kill him, and Arthur responds by stabbing Pyrochles in the chest with a spear and wounding him. Cymochles, struck with grief, lashes out at Arthur, knocking him off his horse. Unhorsed without a sword (just his spear), Arthur is in a dangerous situation.

Outnumbered, lacking his sword, and facing some very determined opponents, Arthur seems to be in trouble. Though he fights well and lands a strong blow on Pyrochles, at first the outcome of the fight seems to be up in the air.

Pyrochles and Cymochles both charge Arthur from opposite sides. Though they strike fiercely, Arthur's **shield** stays strong. Arthur manages to strike back with his spear and stab Cymochles through the thigh. This angers Cymochles, who strikes back, wounding Arthur in the side and giving him hope that Arthur might be defeated yet.

Arthur's shield, like the shield of the Redcross Knight before him, represents his steady faith and determination, and so it is what protects him from danger when times are tough. He needs this faith because the fight still seems in danger of going either way.

Arthur's spear breaks, putting him at even more of a disadvantage. The Palmer sees this and gives him the sword of Sir Guyon. Arthur begins attacking again in a rage, like a bull that's being baited in two different directions. Cymochles and Pyrochles keep getting angrier. Cymochles decides to make an attack so reckless that it will either strike Arthur down or allow Cymochles himself to die with honor. Cymochles is unable to kill Arthur, however, so Arthur uses Guyon's blade to strike Cymochles's head, piercing his brain. Cymochles dies and his soul goes to Hell.

Although Arthur has to fight fiercely to keep up with his two opponents, he does not give in to the sort of recklessness they do. This recklessness is Cymochles's undoing as he blows their numerical advantage over Arthur by over-committing to an attack that leaves him vulnerable to a fatal blow. Cymochles's soul's descent to Hell shows that he was not a good knight who got misled but a rotten knight to the core.

Pyrochles is aghast to see Cymochles fall, but he continues the fight. He ends up defeated by Arthur. Arthur says he doesn't want to slay Pyrochles and offers him a chance to stop and give up his evil ways. But Pyrochles rejects this offer, and so Arthur cuts his head off.

Arthur gives Pyrochles a chance to repent, perhaps seeing potential in Pyrochles that he didn't in Cymochles. But when Pyrochles rejects that offer, he reveals himself to be just as hopelessly reckless as Cymochles and so worthy of the same fate.

Just then, Sir Guyon wakes up from his trance. He looks for his missing equipment. The Palmer informs him of all that happened, and how Arthur slew the two pagans who were trying to steal Guyon's things. Guyon is very grateful for Arthur's help. Meanwhile, Archimago and Atin flee the scene quickly.

Although Archimago is capable of causing some very serious trouble for the heroes in the poem, he is helpless when left alone without a disguise, and so he has no choice but to flee.

BOOK II: CANTO IX

After Pyrochles and Cymochles are dead, Arthur recovers his stolen sword and returns Sir Guyon's stolen **shield** back to him. Arthur asks Guyon why he has an image of the Faerie Queene on his shield and Guyon explains how he's in her service. Arthur mentions how he himself has been wandering in search of the queen, so that he can better serve her. Sir Guyon tells Arthur about the evil sorceress Acrasia and how he is planning to get revenge on her.

Sir Guyon is similar to the Redcross Knight in many ways, particularly in his devotion to serving the Faerie Queene. His friendship with Arthur confirms the righteousness of both knights and shows how the pursuit of common values can bond people together, particularly knights following a code of chivalry.

Sir Guyon and Arthur make their way to a castle where the gate is locked. Arthur's squire (Timias) blows a horn, and a watchman comes, warning the knights to go away at once if they value their lives, because many enemies have been laying siege to the castle for a long time. Just then, a thousand enemies come toward the castle.

The blowing of a horn outside a castle gate recalls the Biblical story of the fall of Jericho, where the Israelites blow a horn outside the fortified city and the walls all fall down.

Sir Guyon and Arthur beat the enemies away, scattering them like sheep. The enemies flee but return with a cruel captain, only to be driven off again. Alma, the beautiful virgin lady of the castle, comes down to greet the two noble knights and entertain them in the castle. It's a grand castle with many rooms. She leads them to a hall where an old steward named Diet and a jolly marshal named Appetite work. They give the guests many good things to eat.

The contrast between the noble inhabitants of the castle and the raging swarms of enemies outside shows the challenges of maintaining a virtuous life. It perhaps also illustrates a difference between the elevated nobility and the rude swarms of common people. Most of the heroic characters in the poem are of noble birth.

Alma's palace contains even more incredible sights, including a room of courting ladies where Cupid likes to play mischief. The ladies are intrigued by the knights, and Arthur begins talking to one of them who wears a long purple dress. Her name is Praise-desire, and she is pensive because she wants glory but hasn't achieved it yet. Meanwhile, Sir Guyon entertains a different damsel, who is also fair and so modest that she blushes all the time. Her name is Shamefastness because she's shamefast (which means "shy").

The room of the castle with courting ladies further establishes that the castle represents high society and that the swarms of enemies outside represent common vulgarity. Although Sir Guyon is temperate and not prone to passion, this passage shows that perhaps there is nothing wrong with some moderate courting when conducted in a chaste manner. "Shamefast" is possibly the origin of the word "shame-faced."

Eventually, Arthur and Sir Guyon leave the ladies as Alma leads them to the wondrous upper parts of the castle, where turrets look down on the lands around them. The craftsmanship of the rooms up there is so amazing that the narrator can't even describe it. The most important rooms hold three sages.

Although the narrator doesn't usually draw attention to himself after the introduction to a canto, occasionally, he interrupts to comment on the action.

Alma leads Arthur and Sir Guyon through the sages' rooms. One room is filled with flies that buzz around like idle thoughts and opinions. Another's walls are painted with images of famous leaders and people from the arts and sciences. In yet another room is an extremely old man who has a perfect memory of everything, even the ancient past. The knights view all this in awe before finally arriving at a library, where Arthur takes a book about the history of Britain and Guyon takes a book about the history of faerie land. They leave Alma to read.

The three sages all represent different kinds of knowledge. They foreshadow the next canto, which is set in a library and is all about the type of knowledge that can be gained from reading a book. As with the house of the holy section in Book I, this new knowledge will leave the knights Sir Guyon and Arthur better prepared to face the challenges that await them at the climax to this book.

BOOK II: CANTO X

The narrator talks about how nothing under the sun has ever been as glorious as Britain. The name of Britain's queen in particular (Elizabeth I) is renowned. The narrator says Britain used to be a savage wilderness, full of giants and half-beast men. This all began to change when Brutus, an ancient Roman of royal lineage, established a throne and drove out many of the giants. The history the narrator relates is similar to what Arthur and Sir Guyon are reading in their books.

The poem isn't subtle about its intention to glorify Queen Elizabeth and her reign. This appreciation for Elizabeth is perhaps part of an even deeper appreciation for British culture and identity. This canto lays out a long (and often fictional) history of how Britain became a glorious nation.

After driving out the monsters, Brutus reigns happily for a long time. Brutus leaves his kingdom to his three sons. Locrine, who rules the portion of the kingdom that includes the isle of Britain itself, gains glory for fighting off invaders who threaten the realm. But he becomes too proud after his victory and begins boldly pursuing a lady who isn't his wife (Gwendoline).

The history of Britain that Arthur reads is full of larger-than-life figures. Like many characters in mythology, this version of Brutus is strong enough of a leader to drive the monsters out of Britain, but he has the tragic flaw of succumbing to his own lust.

Noble Gwendoline won't put up with her husband's infidelity, so she gathers an army to vanquish him in battle, then installs her son Madan on the throne so that she can rule behind the scenes.

Spenser perhaps includes this part about Gwendoline on the throne to establish that female leaders like Elizabeth have existed in Britain for a long time.

Madan is an unworthy king, and his son is little better, but the next king in the lineage, Ebranck, makes up for his mediocre predecessors with his many noble deeds. One of his own sons, Brutus II, fights bravely in France.

The history of Britain in this canto is full of ups and downs with heroic leaders being followed by weak ones, indicating a turbulent time in history.

More kings help fortify the realm with construction projects, taking a more peaceful approach to their neighboring nations. The lineage comes then to King Lear, the mythological king who famously made the mistake of entrusting his kingdom to his scheming daughters, Regan and Gonorill, instead of his loyal daughter, Cordelia. The inter-sibling rivalry leads to Cordelia dying and the children of Regan and Gonorill waging their own wars with each other to control Britain.

Spenser lived at around the same time as Shakespeare (who also famously wrote about King Lear) and they may have even influenced each other. The character of King Lear (or Leir) pre-dates both Spenser and Shakespeare by many centuries, and so it's also possible that they independently arrived at the same story.

The bloodshed in Britain lasts for generations until, at last, the final descendant of the line of Brutus is killed by a family member, ending Britain's ancient glory period. Then a new leader called Donwallo rises up and attempts to bring a new period of order to Britain.

The death of Britain's ancient line of rules may seem like a cause for mourning past glories, but it could also be a sign of a new age of modernity.

Donwallo's sons start sacking foreign nations again, returning Britain to its role as a conqueror. This begins a long period with rulers of varying quality, who alternate between focusing on conquest and focusing on laws and construction.

This section touches on an argument that existed long before Spenser and would persist long after him: to what extent Britain should be an empire vs. being more insular.

During the reign of the young Androgeus and Tenantius (who are too young to rule on their own, so their uncle is really in power), Julius Caesar from Rome invades Britain. Caesar conquers the land, at the cost of great bloodshed. (The narrator foreshadows that Arthur will one day rise up against the Romans.)

Julius Caesar was of course a real person, and so this section mixes real history with more deliberately fantastical elements (such as the existence of King Arthur).

Under Roman rule, Britain continues to have its own kings, who occasionally clash with Rome. Far away in Bethlehem, Jesus is born. Eventually, the Roman emperor Claudius attacks England and kills the king. Things begin to become more peaceful later, however, when Lucius ascends the British throne, bringing Christianity with him. Lucius leaves the kingdom in disarray when he dies without an heir.

The clashes between Britain and Rome are important because in Spenser's time there was a clash between Roman Catholicism (led by the pope in Vatican City in Rome) and Anglican Protestantism (which was founded in Britain in opposition to Catholicism).

Following Lucius, a woman named Bundica rises up and fights fiercely against Rome, but she kills herself when she believes she's in danger of being captured in battle. Later, Rome sends a man named Constantius to try to make peace with Britain, and he ends up marrying a British woman and fathering Constantine, the famous Roman emperor who converted the empire to Christianity.

Bundica is another noble warrior woman, and although Spenser didn't invent the character, he likely invokes her here once again to show that there is a precedent for rulers like Elizabeth.

Rome continues to exert control over Britain, but an issue of succession causes disorder in Britain and leads to fighting between Huns and Picts. Rome dissolves as it is overrun by invaders. Much later, a second Constantine is crowned in Rome, and he drives the Huns and the Picts out of Britain.

Rome plays a complicated role in the history of Britain. On the one hand, it is an enemy invader, but on the other hand, it is directly connected to Rome in its ancient history.

One of Constantine's children is Uther Pendragon (the legendary king who is famously the father of Arthur). Arthur, who is reading this book of British history, is surprised that it ends so abruptly after Uther.

The book that Arthur's reading ends abruptly because his life is in fact the very next chapter to be written.

Meanwhile, Sir Guyon has been reading his separate book on the history of faerie land. The narrator claims that the book is too long to fully summarize, so he just gives some highlights, starting with the moment that Prometheus created humans from the parts of beasts, then stole fire from heaven to give to man. Just then, Alma realizes it's late, so Sir Guyon and Arthur reluctantly pause their studies to join her at dinner.

This passage continues the poem's tendency to be vague about where and what faerie land actually is. This ambiguity leaves open different possibilities for interpretation, unlike other elements of the poem, which often have a very clear symbolic connection to something.

BOOK II: CANTO XI

Early in the morning, Sir Guyon and the Palmer set out to continue their adventure. They make it to a river where Alma has told them a ferryman waits. While Sir Guyon gets on the boat, a new swarm of enemies attacks Alma's castle. The vast numbers of enemies split up into different troops, each trying to attack a different part of the castle. The castle has five bulwarks, each named for a different sense: Sight, Hearing, Smell, Taste, and Touch.

The swarms of enemies attack each of the five senses, as represented by the five bulwarks of the castle. Alma's castle is a place of knowledge and learning, so the swarms of enemies could be seen as symbolizing ignorance and other obstacles to learning.

Though the castle walls stay strong at first, Alma is worried. Arthur pledges that he'll do whatever he can to help with defending the castle. He rides out the gate in glittering armor with his squire, and immediately the enemies start firing arrows at him. Arthur blocks them with his **shield** and uses his sword to disperse the swarms of enemies around him.

Arthur goes into battle against the vulgar ignorance of the crowds outside. Throughout The Faerie Queene *there is a clear bias toward enlightened rule by monarchs (Arthur will one day be king) instead of populist rule of the masses.*

In response to Arthur's offense, the captain of the enemies, Maleger, rides out on his tiger. He is followed by two hags, Impotence and Impatience. Maleger and the hags engage Arthur in a fierce battle. Arthur is knocked to the ground and nearly killed, but his squire manages to rescue him just in time.

Impotence and Impatience are both vices that can keep people in ignorance. Impatience in particular is a clear opposite of temperance, the theme of this book. Maleger nevertheless manages to knock Arthur over, showing how even ignorance is capable of blunt force.

Arthur rouses himself off the ground and starts fighting like a bear that just woke up. Maleger gets off his tiger to fight. At one point, Maleger seems to be injured and pleads for mercy, but it's only a trick, and Maleger uses the chance to lash out and start the battle again.

Maleger uses dirty tactics and tricks, aligning him with other trickster characters like Duessa and Archimago. He doesn't follow the rules of chivalry as Arthur does.

The next time Arthur defeats Maleger, he slices him through the chest with his sword. Surprisingly, no blood comes out of the wound, even though you can see straight through the captain's body. The captain doesn't fall, and Arthur is afraid, fearing he is fighting a ghost. Arthur puts aside his weapons and crushes the captain's body with his bare hands against his chest. Arthur is sure the captain is dead this time, but Maleger rises up and keeps fighting.

Arthur's many attempts to kill Maleger show just how durable ignorance can be. Like the swarm of enemies themselves, which seem to regenerate every time some of them are killed, Maleger keeps getting up no matter how many times he's seemingly killed.

Finally, Arthur realizes that the earth is what keeps healing Maleger, so he carries him to a lake and throws him in. Maleger stops moving for good. The hags see this and run over. One drowns herself and the other stabs herself through the heart. Arthur, having lost some blood, is finally the victor, and he's taken back to Alma's castle for his wounds to be treated.

Many noble characters in the poem have a connection to nature, but Malegar's connection to the earth seems perhaps to invoke his commonness instead. This is why his weakness is water, when a nobler knight like Redcross is actually purified by water.

BOOK II: CANTO XII

Sir Guyon has been sailing for two days with the Palmer when he hears from his boatman that they're about to pass through the Gulf of Greediness. The gulf has heavy waves and dangerous rocks that can eat sailors up. The most dangerous rock is called the Rock of Reproach. Fortunately, Guyon's boat makes it through unscathed.

The dangerous gulf and rocks that Sir Guyon encounters at sea recall the various temptations he faced when he was separated from the Palmer.

The boatman then tells Sir Guyon about the Wandering Islands, which have Greek names and travel in different directions through the water. The islands seem pleasant and tempt men to land on them. As Guyon's boat passes through the Wandering Islands, he spots Phaedria on one of them. He stays wary, however, and the boat makes it past the islands.

The final book begins with something like a victory lap for Sir Guyon, who is now barely even moved by Phaedria and her island, which originally separated him from the Palmer and almost trapped him for good.

The next obstacles at sea are the quicksands of Unthriftiness and the Whirlpool of Decay, but the boatman maneuvers around them. Unfortunately, however, the boat is soon surrounded by thousands of ugly sea monsters. The Palmer manages to calm these monsters by striking the sea with his staff.

Both the boatman's skilled navigation and the Palmer's intervention with the sea monster show how Sir Guyon has not only fortified his own virtue but also surrounded himself with people who make him better.

Next the boat comes to an island, where a fair, weeping maiden seems to call to them. Sir Guyon wants to turn the boat towards her, but the Palmer warns him that she is false. They also pass some singing mermaids, but taking the Palmer's advice, Guyon ignores their calls.

This section was likely inspired by the sirens made famous in The Odyssey, which sang beautifully in order to lure sailors to their doom. Once again, the Palmer protects Guyon.

Soon after, during bad weather, the boat is surrounded by fearsome winged creatures, like birds, bats, and harpies. But at last, the weather improves and Sir Guyon and the Palmer disembark. As they walk on land, the Palmer keeps evil fiends away with his staff. At last, they make it to the Bower of Bliss, where Acrasia dwells.

The Palmer's spiritual strength becomes something physical, driving away wild beasts that would stand in his way. The arrival at Acrasia's Bower of Bliss marks the end of Sir Guyon's long journey that began with meeting Amavia.

The gate to the bower is intricate, decorated with precious ivory and illustrating stories from mythology. Near the entrance is a man called Genius, who is decked in flowers and seems wise, but who secretly wants to make men fall. He welcomes Sir Guyon, but Guyon sees through him and breaks his staff.

Minor figures in the poem often have very straightforward names, but there can also be deceptive layers to them. The quality of "genius," for example, is often thought of as a good thing, but here it's portrayed as a quality that can make men vulnerable to Acrasia's tricks.

The inside of the bower is as amazing as the gate, with perfect weather and sweet smells everywhere. Sir Guyon is in awe of the place but takes no delight from it. A woman in fair clothes named Excess is holding a cup of gold that she offers to Guyon to taste. Guyon takes her cup, then he throws it on the ground.

Excess represents how the pleasures in Acrasia's Bower of Bliss go well beyond what a temperate man should accept. Sir Guyon isn't even tempted for a moment, showing a total rejection of Excess and all she represents.

In the middle of the bower is a fountain that is pure and shiny because it's made of the richest stuff on earth. Infinite streams seem to come out of it. In the middle of the fountain, two naked damsels are wrestling with each other. When the maidens see Sir Guyon, they laugh and blush and invite him to join them. The Palmer, however, warns Guyon not to.

Even at his most virtuous, Sir Guyon seems to still be tempted by some of the pleasures offered in the garden, but with the Palmer at his side, he is only ever distracted for a moment.

At last, Sir Guyon and the Palmer make it to the part of the Bower of Bliss where Acrasia resides. Birds, voices, instruments, and all of nature seem to sing out together. Acrasia is lying with a lover, who seems to be enchanted with her witchcraft. It looks like her young lover comes from nobility, and he is strong like a warrior.

Acrasia's evil garden bears a superficial resemblance to some of the more virtuous gardens referenced in the poem, such as Eden and the garden of Venus. It is only Guyon's previous knowledge about the bower that helps Guyon know its true nature.

Sir Guyon and the Palmer sneak up on Acrasia and her lover. Then, all of a sudden, they rush forward and throw a net over Acrasia. They chain her up, but allow her lover, Verdant, to be untied. Guyon then begins totally destroying the bower. They lead Acrasia and Verdant out, with the Palmer again having to use his skills to pacify the raging beasts around them. The Palmer explains that these beasts were actually men who used to be Acrasia's lovers but who were transformed.

Although Sir Guyon represents temperance, he nevertheless takes aggressive and decisive action to destroy the Bower of Bliss. Acrasia has tempted and enslaved countless men, and Guyon destroys the bower to prevent future men from falling into a state of intemperance.

One beast, a hog named Grill, is returned to human form by the Palmer's staff. But Grill still chooses to act like a beast, causing Sir Guyon and the Palmer to lament how some men prefer to remain in filth. They depart.

Although some of the previous sections have depicted the men in Acrasia's thrall as victims, this final section complicates the story by showing that some men prefer to be beasts, even when given the option.

BOOK III: PROEM

The narrator announces that he'd like to write about Chastity, which he believes is the highest of the virtues. In fact, Chastity is so great that the narrator fears his quill isn't good enough to write properly about it, but he hopes that his audience, the queen, will see some of herself and her own chastity in the following book.

Chastity has already played a major role in the previous books, particularly with the virtuous female characters, and so it makes sense that the narrator would consider it important. Chastity is also significant because of how it relates to the real-life Queen Elizabeth's status as an unwed monarch.

BOOK III: CANTO I

Arthur has been spending time at Alma's castle and has finally recovered from his battle wounds. Meanwhile, Sir Guyon sends Acrasia back in chains to the Faerie Queene and decides to go traveling with Arthur. They go on many dangerous but glorious adventures together.

The beginning of Book III ties up the adventures of Book II, as it transitions toward introducing a new character who will become the focus of the third book.

One day on a plain, Sir Guyon spots a knight with an old squire. The knight starts charging at him on his horse, and the two attack each other with spears. Though no one is seriously injured, Guyon is shocked and ashamed to find himself knocked off his horse. It turns out his opponent's lance is enchanted, and in fact, his opponent is none other than the famous knight Britomart, who is adventuring to find her lover.

As the knight of temperance, Sir Guyon has a lot in common with Britomart, who is the knight who represents chastity. It is perhaps shocking that Britomart knocks Guyon off his horse, particularly given how weak many of the virtuous women in the poem have been so far, although Britomart shares a sense of faith and chastity with previous women characters like Una.

Sir Guyon would rather die than be shamed, which worries the Palmer, so he persuades Guyon not to press his luck against Britomart and her enchanted lance. Eventually, everyone's temper cools, and Guyon and Britomart reach an understanding because they're both honorable. They (and Arthur) decide to ride together.

The difference between Sir Guyon and a brash knight like Pyrochles is that Sir Guyon can listen to reason, particularly when it's delivered to him by the Palmer.

Sir Guyon, Arthur, and Britomart travel together for a while, across many countries, having many adventures. One day, they see a lady in shining clothes ride out of a thick brush on a white horse. She is followed by a brutish foster (forester), who seems to be full of lust.

The friendship between Sir Guyon and Britomart illustrates how virtue and shared values can lead people to find common purpose.

While Sir Guyon and Arthur are going to help the fair lady, Britomart stays behind, then eventually she heads off on her own, arriving at a castle. At the castle, six knights are in a fight against one very mighty knight. The knight has taken some heavy blows but keeps fighting fiercely. Britomart is dismayed and asks everyone to stop fighting. They don't listen at first, but finally she brings peace. Britomart says they should explain the cause of their disagreement.

Since Book III is dedicated to the virtue of chastity, it follows the character of Britomart—who exemplifies chastity—rather than going with Sir Guyon or Arthur. Like the male knights, Britomart's sense of duty to chivalry causes her to try to intervene whenever she sees people arguing or in trouble.

The lone knight says that the other six were trying to force him to love a different damsel than the one he currently does. It turns out that the knight is the Redcross Knight (and so his lady is Una). Britomart believes the six knights are in the wrong for trying to separate a knight from his lady, but they explain that there is a lovely lady inside the castle who has made a rule: any knight without his own love can do service to this lady in the castle, and any knight with a lady must battle to prove the worth of his own lady.

The reveal of the Redcross Knight's identity suggests that the knights opposing him are in the wrong, since the Redcross Knight is noble and firm in his commitment to Una. The theme of knights being driven to do bad things by a lady picks up right where the previous book left off with Acrasia in the Bower of Bliss.

Britomart still isn't convinced by the six knights, and she starts knocking them down one by one with her enchanted spear. When there are only two of the six knights left standing, they yield and seek peace. Britomart and the Redcross Knight agree to spare them all.

Britomart proves that her victory over Sir Guyon wasn't just a fluke and that she's one of the most powerful knights around.

The castle turns out to be Castle Joyous, where the Lady of Delight (Malecasta) resides. The castle is sumptuously decorated, with references to mythology like the story of Venus and Adonis. At last, they see the Lady of Delight lying on her bed like a proud Persian queen. The Redcross Knight disarms, but Britomart doesn't.

References to Persia in the poem often suggest a connection to "paganism" (specifically, Islam), and so this immediately paints the Lady of Delight as representing the opposite of the poem's Protestant heroes.

Britomart sees that the six knights she fought are brothers. Though they have been trained in knightly skills and civility, they are little more than shadows to Britomart. The Lady of Delight keeps insisting that Britomart take off her armor, full of lust and believing that Britomart is a man.

Britomart is frequently mistaken for a man in the poem, suggesting that at least part of her ability to be respected as a knight is based on her ability to conceal her true identity.

After a lavish dinner with everyone, Malecasta (the name of the Lady of Delight) can't rest that night. She sneaks out of her room and very gently goes up beside Britomart in bed. Britomart fears a lecher and grabs her weapon, causing Malecasta to scream, and causing the Redcross Knight and the six other knights to come running. When they get to the scene, the six knights think Britomart has attacked Malecasta.

This section finally reveals Malecasta's true nature and that beneath her seeming hospitality lurks an uncontrollable lust. Britomart, however, is such a fierce defender of her own chastity that she was expecting an intruder and manages to escape without too much trouble.

One of the six knights fires an arrow that wounds Britomart. She fights back, though, and with the Redcross Knight's help, they soon have the six knights running in fear. Britomart puts on her armor and they ride away from the castle.

The arrows fired at Britomart are similar to Cupid's arrows and reflect a futile attempt to make Britomart stay.

BOOK III: CANTO II

Britomart continues to travel with Sir Guyon. She tells him about how she was trained in warlike ways from a young age and how she disdained fancy needles and thread, favoring the spear instead. She has traveled all the way from Britain seeking adventure, but most especially seeking out a man named Arthegall, who treated her dishonorably.

Just as her outward appearance is masculine, Britomart's interests when she was young were also masculine. Nevertheless, one way in which she does resemble other women in the story is her devotion to finding a husband.

Hearing this, the Redcross Knight joins the conversation, saying he is surprised: he has heard of Arthegall, but he knows him as one of the noblest knights ever born. In fact, however, Britomart is happy to hear this, because she believes Arthegall is destined to be her love. She still pretends that she has heard bad things about him, and Redcross reassures her that Arthegall is a knight with a good heart.

Britomart does not actually believe Arthegall is dishonorable—she only says this in order to see Arthur's reaction. Alternatively, it's possible to read her statement as a sort of joke because Arthegall has treated her poorly (by making her lovesick), even if he doesn't realize it.

Without revealing her true feelings, Britomart says she wants to see Arthegall. Redcross describes his appearance, which matches up with what Britomart herself saw back in Britain, in a magic mirror created by the great wizard Merlin himself. According to the mirror, Arthegall will be her husband.

Britomart's connection to Merlin means that, like King Arthur, Britomart is a symbol of British identity. Her name even resembles "Britain." Her good qualities therefore reflect back on all of Britain and particularly the leadership of its Queen Elizabeth.

Back then, in Britain, Britomart begins to feel pangs of love so strong that she can't sleep. Her nurse, Glauce, realizes that something is amiss and asks what's paining her. Britomart explains that her vision of Arthegall is rankling her like an ulcer. The nurse reassures her that there is nothing strange or monstrous about the affection she feels. She advises that perhaps the best way to cure her affliction is to figure out the identity of her knight. Glauce puts together a potion to try to cure Britomart's affliction, but it doesn't work. Britomart's love continues to haunt her.

Britomart's origin story reveals that she was not always the powerful knight that she currently is. While lust is often portrayed in the poem as a type of disease (as it was for the men who became infected with desire for pleasure in Acrasia's Bower of Bliss), this section shows that even pure love can affect a person as if it were a disease.

BOOK III: CANTO III

The narrator calls again on his Muse to make sure he does justice to the glory of Britomart's story. Glauce looks for ways to comfort Britomart, but she remains troubled by her love. She has heard that the great wizard Merlin might be able to show her where her love is located, so they journey to find him.

This canto provides greater detail about Britomart's change from a normal young woman into the powerful knight she eventually becomes, as was hinted in the previous canto.

Merlin is so powerful that he can make the sun and moon obey him. Glauce and Britomart arrive and find Merlin deep in his work, writing strange symbols into the ground. Because of his ability to see the future, he already knew they would be coming.

This section builds up Merlin's power and influence, which also has the effect of showing how important Britomart herself will eventually become.

Glauce tells Merlin that the maid with her (Britomart) has an affliction so serious that even leeches can't cure it. Though Britomart is disguised as a servant, Merlin can tell who she is. Britomart is embarrassed at being discovered, but Merlin assures her it was destiny that brought her to him, and soon destiny will bring her to find her love, an exceptional knight named Arthegall, who is from faerie land but not a faerie himself (having been stolen by faeries as a baby).

Many characters throughout the poem experience some form of love as a disease. The connection between love and physical conditions is similar to how a character's physical condition is often connected to their spiritual condition, with virtuous characters being the bravest and the strongest.

Merlin goes on to tell Arthegall's future and how he will wage glorious war against the pagans and give birth to a noble lineage. His descendants will achieve triumphs but also face setbacks as they establish Britain's place in the world. Britomart is swept up in these stories of the future, which feel so vivid.

Merlin's description of the future suggests a glorious future Britain, tying into the poem's themes about British national identity and national pride.

Merlin continues his story of Arthegall's descendants, telling of the next 800 years. At last, Merlin has exhausted his power, and his story stops. When he recovers, Glauce suggests that they should disguise Britomart as a knight so that nobody bothers her on her journey to find Arthegall.

Merlin's figure of 800 years could be interpreted as stretching all the way to the time of Queen Elizabeth or perhaps even beyond it, suggesting that her reign was destined by events that were set in motion centuries ago.

Britomart is eager to start her journey. She and Glauce sneak into an armory where they get equipment for Britomart, including a **shield** and a spear that happens to be enchanted. Britomart begins her quest to faerie land with Glauce as her squire, where she eventually reaches her present state, in which she runs into the Redcross Knight and he tells her about Arthegall.

Obtaining equipment is Britomart's first step in becoming a knight. The shield represents the defensive, protector role of a knight, while the enchanted lance represents the glory of battle.

BOOK III: CANTO IV

The narrator says that even the heroes of old from Homer's time can't compare with Britomart. After learning of Arthegall's whereabouts from the Redcross Knight, Britomart parts from him and continues on her journey. Despite making progress, she is still pained by the wound inside her caused by love. Glauce comforts Britomart in her pain by reminding her of Merlin's prophecy.

The fact that Britomart is more spectacular than even the ancient heroes of Homer suggests that all the things she represents (specifically Britain and Queen Elizabeth) are equally spectacular.

All of a sudden, while she is near a beach, Britomart's grief is turned to wrath when she sees a knight charging at her. The knight warns her to change her course, but she doesn't, and she ends up wounding the knight with her enchanted spear. The knight, whose name is Marinell, lies bleeding on the shore, which is strewn with precious objects.

Marinell is a complicated figure in the poem. Although at first he might seem to be just another rash knight like Pyrochles or Cymochles, later parts of the poem show that he has greater depth.

Marinell is the son of a nymph named Cymoent and had previously subdued a hundred other knights in battle. This is how he built up such a large pile of riches. Long before Marinell's fight with Britomart, his mother the nymph was concerned that her son would die in battle to someone trying to take his wealth, so she went to Proteus, who has the gift of prophecy.

This passage once again illustrates the glory of Britomart, since if Marinell defeated a hundred knights, and Britomart defeated him, this suggests that she was more powerful than those hundred knights, too.

Proteus warned Marinell's mother, Cymoent, that her son should stay away from women because one will grievously injure or perhaps even kill him. From then on, Cymoent warned Marinell to scorn the company of women. As it turns out, however, Britomart comes along to fulfill Proteus's prophecy by wounding Marinell.

Like many prophecies in fiction, Proteus's prediction that Marinell will be undone by a woman comes to pass in a way that is both unexpected and ironic (since Britomart is a woman, just not one trying to tempt or trick him).

Back in the present, sea creatures and nymphs, including Cymoent, come to witness Marinell looking nearly dead. Neptune, the god of the sea, is himself amazed at the display of mourning. Cymoent faints three times. The other nymphs realize Marinell is still alive and take him back to treat his wounds.

This scene of the sea people grieving Marinell's injury helps to give his character greater depth and to show that he may have noble qualities that weren't immediately apparent in his conflict with Britomart.

While tending to Marinell, the nymphs curse whoever injured him. Meanwhile Archimago the evil wizard has been stalking Britomart ever since she left Arthur and Sir Guyon (who were trying to help a damsel who was being chased).

Although Archimago doesn't do anything here, it seems clear that his presence foreshadows bad times ahead for Britomart.

Eventually, Arthur catches up with the damsel he's been following, but she keeps fleeing, scared off by his unfamiliar **shield** and armor. Arthur keeps pursuing her, but eventually he gets exhausted and has to sleep. His sleep brings him little rest, however, as he dreams about how he wishes the lady he's currently chasing were actually the Faerie Queene. He spends the rest of the night haunted by restlessness and waiting for morning before finally getting up the next day to continue his quest.

Arthur's seemingly endless quest to find the Faerie Queene provides a running subplot that intersects with the main plots of all the books. This passage is perhaps humorous since Arthur is so intent on helping a damsel who doesn't even seem to want his help, showing the lengths that a noble knight will go for the sake of chivalry.

BOOK III: CANTO V

Still searching for the woman who ran off, Arthur wanders through a forest before he finally comes out and meets a dwarf. The dwarf is frantic and out of breath. He says that he's searching for a woman riding on a white horse, whom Arthur recognizes as the same woman he's looking for himself. The dwarf explains that this woman is a fair virgin named Florimell.

Florimell's name immediately suggests a connection to Marinell. The two names are similar but also diametrically opposed, with Florimell's name suggesting flowers ("flora") and Marinell's name suggesting the sea ("marine").

Florimell, according to the dwarf, is in love with the knight Marinell, but news has just come that Marinell has potentially been slain (he hasn't, although Britomart did badly injure him). When she heard this, Florimell immediately went off to the Faerie Queene's **Faerie Court** to try to find out if Marinell is okay and help him. Since the dwarf and Arthur are looking for the same person, they agree to go together.

The figure of the Faerie Queene again connects separate, seemingly distinct parts of the story. Here she represents a source of help that Florimell turns to in her time of need. The Faerie Queene represents different things to different characters, embodying duty for the Redcross Knight, a savior for Florimell, and the end of the journey for Arthur.

Meanwhile, Arthur's squire Timias has been busy defeating the lustful foster who was chasing Florimell earlier. The foster flees Timias because he's a coward, but as soon as he's away, he starts spreading lies about Timias to try to spur anger against him. The foster's two brothers are indeed angered and vow revenge on Timias.

Timias as Arthur's squire seems to have been invented or at least popularized by The Faerie Queene, *since the character doesn't appear in most other versions of the Arthurian legend.*

The foster and his brothers sneak up on Timias and try to attack him, but their initial strike doesn't injure him much. A fierce battle ensues. Timias suffers a serious wound to his left thigh, but he kills the brother who injured him, then proceeds to split the head of the foster clean in half, killing him, too. The last remaining brother fearfully tries shooting an arrow at Timias, but Timias just lops his head off.

Timias may not be as fearsome a warrior as his mentor, Arthur, but he nevertheless fights well, suggesting that he's brave, even in the face of injury.

Timias takes little joy in his victory because his thigh wound is still bleeding heavily. He passes out. Fortunately for Timias, he is found by the huntress Belphoebe, who recently won her battle with Braggadochio and has been pursuing a wild beast through the woods. She sees the wounded squire and can tell that he's noble. She goes to look for herbs to help him.

The character of Belphoebe also helps to connect seemingly disconnected threads in the story, linking the stories of Braggadochio (who stole Sir Guyon's horse) to Arthur's squire, Timias.

Timias awakes and is amazed to find that Belphoebe has dressed his wounds. He praises her, saying she's like an angel, causing her to blush. Belphoebe's damsels, who assist her in hunting, arrive at the scene, and together, they all go back to the pleasant glade where Belphoebe lives.

Belphoebe is a fair virgin, but since here Timias is respectful in his praise, she doesn't condemn him for his attentions. Her hunting damsels recall the nymphs of the Greek goddess Diana, who is a figure with many similarities to Belphoebe.

Unintentionally, however, Belphoebe has only healed one wound to create another, patching up Timias's body but causing his heart to fall in love with her. He worries that as a lowly squire, he isn't good enough for her. Belphoebe sees Timias's unease and thinks perhaps he has been poisoned. She continues to exhibit exemplary care for Timias, and the narrator also praises her chastity.

Timias's painful physical wound from love recalls the similar love-wound that motivated Britomart to become a knight and seek out Arthegall. Despite the pain of a love-wound, the story suggests that such a wound is normal and perhaps even healthy.

BOOK III: CANTO VI

The narrator begins to describe the birth of Belphoebe and how she became so perfect in her manners and so chaste. Her mother is a fairy named Chrysogonee, who also gave birth to Belphoebe's twin sister, Amoretta (also sometimes called Amoret). Chrysogonee is actually a virgin who fell asleep in the grass one day and got impregnated by sunbeams. Alarmed at first because she is so strict about her honor, Chrysogonee goes deep into the woods to give birth to her twins.

The virgin birth of Belphoebe makes her a significant, miraculous character. Her character is so devoted to chastity that even her mother has never had sex and conceived Belphoebe without anything other than sunbeams. Amoretta's similar birth suggests that she is an equally chaste character who will be important to the story.

Meanwhile Venus, the goddess of love, is looking for her son Cupid, who has run off. She looks in court, then in cities, then in the country—all places Cupid likes to visit—but she is always too late. Finally, she goes to the woods, where the hunting goddess Diana reigns.

Although Venus might seem to be the opposite of chastity, in fact, she represents pure love and is thus a positive figure in the poem.

When Venus arrives in the woods, Diana scolds her damsels for not giving her proper notice in order to get herself ready. Venus asks about Cupid and if perhaps he is with Diana's nymphs, and Diana takes offense at this, saying Venus can go look for him herself. Venus backtracks and says nice things about Diana, so at last, she agrees to send out her nymphs to help the search for Cupid.

Just as in Greek and Roman mythology, the gods in the poem often have different goals, with goddesses like Venus and Diana alternately having conflict with each other and working together.

While Diana's nymphs are looking for Cupid, they come across Chrysogonee, who is asleep and unaware that she has just given birth to twins. The goddesses decide to each take a twin, with Diana naming hers Belphoebe and Venus naming hers Amoretta.

While Belphoebe is not quite a normal mortal, she becomes a more humanlike representative of Diana, just as Amoretta will become a more humanlike version of Venus.

Venus raises Amoretta in the beautiful Garden of Adonis. The garden contains all sorts of creatures, which are sent out into the world to replenish their stocks, yet the stocks in the garden never seem to diminish. Life is transformed in the garden, with old decaying matter taking fresh new forms. The only bad thing about the garden is Time, who flies around and cuts plants and creatures down, mercilessly and indiscriminately.

The Garden of Adonis provides a positive contrast to Acrasia's Bower of Bliss. In the Garden of Adonis, people enjoy pleasure, but only in moderation. Nevertheless, even this seemingly perfect garden has the deadly Time in it, which represents mortality.

In the middle of the garden is a round-topped mount strewn with shining dew, where wicked creatures never roam. In the thickest part of the trees on the mount is a place where every sort of flower imaginable grows. It's there that Venus entertains her lover Adonis (who is mortal, but the garden lets him live in eternal bliss anyway).

Again, the scene of Venus with her lover in a thicket recalls the scene of Acrasia in a hammock with her lover in the Bower of Bliss. Acrasia's real flaw was not necessarily that she pursued pleasure, but that she did it so recklessly.

After Cupid is done making mischief in the world, he comes back to the garden to be with Psyche (his wife) and Pleasure (his daughter). There, Psyche also helps raise Amoretta next to Pleasure. Amoretta will grow up to be a noble, chaste lady. She'll eventually fall in love with a great knight named Scudamore and face many challenges, but the narrator says that's another story. The narrator says it's time to return to the current story.

The Faerie Queene is an epic with many different characters and plots, and here the narrator hints at a plot that won't become relevant for several more cantos. Despite the episodic nature of the poem, the connections between characters help provide a sense of unity.

BOOK III: CANTO VII

Long after Florimell is safe from the foster, she keeps fleeing. Her white horse continues to carry her as fast as it can go for a while, but eventually it reaches a point where it can go no further. As she gets off and continues on foot, she sees smoke coming out over the trees and goes to investigate, coming across a little cottage.

Florimell's white horse signifies her own purity. Just as a white horse carries her around the world physically, her virtue is what carries her through life metaphorically.

Inside the cottage is an old hag. The hag asks angrily why Florimell is there, and she begins to cry. The evil hag gets the idea for a scheme. Soon after, the hag's son comes home and is shocked to see the beautiful Florimell there. Despite immediately falling in love with Florimell, however, the son can't vocalize his desires. Instead, he brings her little forest animals and garlands of flowers as gifts.

Like many chaste female characters (besides Britomart and Belphoebe), Florimell is helpless on her own and at times a little naïve. She doesn't seem to grasp that the old hag and her son pose a danger to her.

Eventually, Florimell feels she'd like to leave the cottage. She knows the hag or the hag's son might try to stop her, so she tries to sneak off on her white horse. When the son realizes she's gone, he is distraught, scratching and biting himself, so the hag tries, unsuccessfully, to cure his broken heart with charms and herbs.

The hag's son is yet another character in Book III to experience a physical lovesickness. But unlike the pure loves of Britomart or Timias, the love the son feels is a wilder, more corrupt love, as shown by his biting and scratching.

Eventually, the hag summons forth a hideous beast that looks like a deformed hyena, which feeds on women's flesh. It goes chasing after Florimell. Florimell sees the ugly creature and fears for her life. The monster slays and eats her white horse. Florimell flees towards the sea, feeling that she'd rather drown herself than get caught. Luckily, when she gets to the shore, she finds a boat there and climbs aboard.

The ugliness of the beast that the hag conjures up symbolizes the ugliness of her son's lust for Florimell. This wild lust destroys whatever gets in its way, and unfortunately for Florimell, her horse becomes an innocent victim.

The hyena-like monster can't follow Florimell in her boat, but it stands on the shore watching. While the monster is there, Sir Satyrane happens to come wandering by on his own adventure. Seeing Florimell's situation, he begins attacking the monster.

Sir Satyrane shares Belphoebe's connection to the forest, and so it makes sense that he returns in Book III (where Belphoebe and nature are recurring topics) to continue his adventures.

The beast is fearsome and won't go down. Finally, Sir Satyrane manages to restrain it with a **gold belt** taken from Florimell's waist (which Satyrane found lying in the forest earlier). After tying the beast up, Satyrane sees a giantess (Argante) riding off on a horse with a bound squire (the Squire of Dames) as her prisoner, pursued by a knight (Britomart). Satyrane leaves the beast to chase the giantess.

Satyrane's adventure is just beginning. After restraining the beast that was attacking Florimell, he finds another helpless victim (whose identity is later revealed as the Squire of Dames) in need of assistance.

As Sir Satyrane approaches the giantess, she prepares for battle with her heavy iron mace. She strikes hard and hits Satyrane on the helmet, stunning him. The giantess grabs Satyrane and is going to take him away, but when the knight pursuing her gets closer, she decides to drop Satyrane instead.

Giants are fearsome opponents in the poem—one defeated the Redcross Knight and now the same nearly happens here to Sir Satyrane. They represent how sometimes the overwhelming brute power of evil is too much for righteous knights to overcome.

Sir Satyrane wakes on the ground, disappointed about how the battle went. It turns out that the giantess also dropped the squire she was holding. The handsome squire tells how he fell into the hands of the giantess, whose name is Argante. The giantess is so lusty that she has sex with beasts, and she roams the country for young men to quench her desires. The giantess captured the squire with the intention of forcing him to serve her.

The lusty, hungry giantess is similar to the hyena-like monster that was just chasing Florimell earlier in the canto. With the exception of heroic characters like Belphoebe and Britomart, powerful women in the story most often use their strength as a way to oppress men.

The squire, who asks to be called the Squire of Dames, goes on to explain how the knight chasing Argante is actually a virgin woman paladin (meaning Britomart). He explains that he got his nickname because in order to win the love of his lady, she asked him to "do service unto gentle Dames." The squire did just that, finding favor in the hearts of 300 different dames. But when the squire goes back to his own dame, she is angry and punishes him to instead find 300 chaste dames who will refuse his advances.

The Squire of Dames may not have deserved to be eaten by Argante, but he is also potentially a morally dubious character. The phrase "do service unto gentle Dames" could have a sexual connotation, suggesting that perhaps the squire was using his lady's orders as an opportunity to be unfaithful to her.

The Squire of Dames tells about how he's tried to find 300 dames who will refuse him, but so far, he's only found three. Sir Satyrane listens to the squire's plight before heading back to where he left the hyena-monster, which has broken free and gone back to tell the hag about Florimell.

The fact that the Squire of Dames has only found three women to refuse him so far suggests that perhaps he is not trying all that hard to finish his lady's assigned task.

BOOK III: CANTO VIII

The hag spots the hyena-like beast running back toward her. She sees Florimell's **gold belt** and thinks the beast has destroyed her, which upsets her lovesick son to the point where he could almost kill his mother. She flees.

Because the hag had bad intentions when she created the monster to chase Florimell, her actions end up having negative effects she didn't anticipate.

The hag gets the idea of pacifying her son by changing someone else to look like Florimell. She gathers some pure snow and molds it, putting two burning lamps in the eyes and using golden wire for the hair, then she has one of her sprites control the body.

The objects used to create a fake Florimell suggest that her beauty has something elemental to it, combining the purity of snow with the vibrancy of fire.

The sprite is already well trained in the ways of women, and so the son is pleased. One day, they go walking in the woods until eventually they come across Braggadochio. Proud Braggadochio tells "Florimell" (the sprite in disguise) that he'd like to ride off with her, then proceeds to do so.

The whole poem reflects the anxiety that seemingly good women might actually be false. Florimell is the second woman in the poem to be impersonated by a sprite (after Una in Book I).

But as Braggadochio is riding off with the sprite disguised as Florimell, he comes across a powerful-looking knight. The knight wants the fake Florimell. Braggadochio suggests they should fight, but that first they should turn around and ride away from each other, to give themselves space to charge and attack. As the knight does this, Braggadochio runs away, leaving his "lady" behind.

Braggadochio is a superficial knight who doesn't put much thought or planning into his decisions, so of course he is fooled by the fake Florimell. But he doesn't want her enough to fight for her, and so he once again demonstrates his cowardice by fleeing at the first available opportunity.

Meanwhile, the real Florimell is stuck at sea, still in the boat. Though she is safe in the boat, the fisherman who owns the boat falls asleep, and the boat begins to drift. When he wakes up, Florimell asks him to pilot the boat to shore, but the old fisherman just grins to see such a lovely woman aboard his boat and begins to feel lustful. He greedily leaps at her, but she rebukes him.

This section emphasizes the danger that Florimell is in without a faithful knight to protect her. Even the boatman, who seemed to be helping Florimell, was really just scheming to greedily claim her as his own.

The old fisherman doesn't heed Florimell's refusal and throws her down. Florimell shouts and prays for anyone to help her. Proteus, the shepherd of the seas, comes to her aid and beats the fisherman harshly with his staff. Florimell gets up, unsure whether she can trust Proteus, but his soothing voice comforts her. He takes Florimell away to his bower while tossing the lecherous old fisherman onto the shore.

Proteus is another complicated figure in the poem who is neither fully good nor fully bad. Here, he seems to be heroic, rushing to Florimell's aid just as a brave knight would, but the next section immediately undercuts that image.

Proteus tries to entertain and woo Florimell, even transforming himself into a faerie knight because he believes that's what she likes. When this doesn't work, Proteus begins transforming into more dreadful things, like a giant or a centaur, in order to threaten her, then locks her in his dungeon.

Though Proteus seemed heroic at first, he eventually reveals his true nature as someone who lusts for Florimell just as much as the old fisherman.

The narrator regrets that it's time to turn away from Florimell back to the adventures of Sir Satyrane. Having recently finished talking with the Squire of Dames, he sees a knight riding towards him that he recognizes as Paridell, based on the colors of his crest. Paridell tells of the ruin of Marinell and of the sudden departure of Florimell, whom all the knights in court are searching for.

The structure of the poem often builds suspense by leaving an unresolved plot thread in order to check in on a different part of the story. This brief section helps to catch Satyrane up on events happening elsewhere.

Sir Satyrane tells Paridell that he fears Florimell is dead (since he found her **gold belt** and since the monster ate her horse). Paridell is upset to hear this, although he remains determined to keep looking, despite the bad odds. The Squire of Dames, who is still nearby, notes that the sun is going down, so he suggests that they all find somewhere to stay. They make their way to a castle, but for some mysterious reason, the door won't open to lodgers.

The golden belt suggests that even after her "death," Florimell will leave something valuable behind. The belt symbolizes her chastity and particularly how chastity can be as valuable as gold.

BOOK III: CANTO IX

The narrator promises that he'll finally explain why Paridell and Sir Satyrane aren't being allowed into the castle. The owner of the castle is Malbecco, and his wife is Hellenore. Malbecco is a withered old man who hoards wealth that he's stolen. He is afraid that if he lets his gates open, his younger wife Hellenore will leave him. Paridell says the man must be insane to trap himself inside, but Satyrane suggests they try to reason with him.

Refusing hospitality for knights is a sign of bad manners and of disrespect for chivalry. It soon becomes clear that Malbecco is in fact an uncourteous man, too afraid of losing his own money or his wife to worry about the condition of others.

Sir Satyrane tries knocking on the castle door, but he's refused. As a storm comes, they take shelter in a little shed nearby where many others are also taking shelter. Another knight comes by and knocks and is also refused. He also tries to go to the shed, but it's full, and the new knight gets angry. Paridell and the new knight start a fight, but Satyrane breaks them up after Paridell is knocked over. They agree they have a common foe in Malbecco.

Paridell's ability to get drawn into a petty fight suggests that perhaps he is not a knight of the same caliber as Sir Satyrane, who breaks the fight up and acts as the voice of reason by directing everyone toward their real enemy.

Sensing the knights plotting against him, Malbecco reluctantly agrees to let them inside and blames his servants for bad courtesy. When the knights make it inside and start taking off their armor, Sir Satyrane and Paridell realize that the stranger knight is a woman with blond hair—Britomart. They are amazed at the sight of her.

Malbecco's inability to take blame for his own faults is yet another sign of his weak character. In the end, he doesn't invite the knights in out of sympathy but out of fear that they're plotting against him.

At dinner, Malbecco makes excuses about why his lady Hellenore can't come to dinner, but eventually he runs out of them, and she comes to join them. At the table, Malbecco keeps a jealous watch over his guests, but he can't see Paridell, who has locked eyes with Hellenore. Both of them are silently filled with lust.

In the case of his wife Hellenore, Malbecco was perhaps right to worry about someone taking her away. It doesn't mean, however, that he was right to keep knights out of his castle—in some ways, it seems to be his own fault for picking an unfaithful wife.

After dinner, Hellenore suggests that such brave knights should tell a story about their deeds. Paridell agrees and begins telling the story of the Trojan War. Britomart is moved by the part of the story where Troy is destroyed, because she's British and the Britons are supposedly the descendants of the Trojans.

The Trojan war began when Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, was taken away from her Greek husband by the Trojans and is most famously told in the epic poems the Iliad *and the* Odyssey. *The similarity of the names Helen and Hellenore is intentional.*

Britomart picks up the story and begins telling about Aeneas, a Trojan whose adventures after the war were chronicled in an epic poem called the *Aeneid*. Aeneas settled the area of Latium, which is eventually where Romulus would found the city of Rome. She speaks of the Roman empire as a second Troy, then says that a third Troy will one day rise, perhaps on the banks of the Thames (where London is located).

Brutus, the mythical founder of Britain whom Arthur read about in Book II, was a descendant of Aeneas, and so through him, British people like Britomart have their own connection to Aeneas.

Paridell interrupts to take over the story again. He confirms how Britain is also related to Troy through the lineage of the Trojan Brutus who, after fleeing Troy for Britain, defeated the giants there.

The giants that existed in ancient Britain represent ignorance and paganism that had to be eradicated.

While Paridell is telling the story, Hellenore listens to every word and watches his lips. After the stories, the knights begin talking about various other subjects, and eventually Malbecco decides it's time to go to bed.

The end of this canto foreshadows that something is about to happen between Paridell and Hellenore.

BOOK III: CANTO X

Britomart and Sir Satyrane wake up ready to leave the next morning, but Paridell complains that he was injured in his fight with Britomart and so needs more time to recover before he can ride. They leave without him. Malbecco is not happy to still have Paridell as a guest, but he grudgingly agrees to it.

Paridell's complaint is obviously an excuse in order to stay behind at the castle and continue spending time with Hellenore.

Though Malbecco keeps an eye on Paridell and on his wife Hellenore, Paridell keeps an even sharper eye. When Hellenore is away from Malbecco, Paridell gives her gifts and sings for her.

Malbecco is so blinded by his paranoid fears of losing Hellenore that he can't even see it when it's happening right in front of him.

On one dark evening, Malbecco happens to be busy elsewhere. Hellenore goes to the closet where Malbecco keeps his wealth and steals some of it, then burns the rest, just like the burning city of Troy. She runs to Paridell, who carries her off. As he carries her away, she shouts for help. Malbecco sees that his wife is being carried off *and* his money is burning at the same time. After some indecision, he goes to save the money first.

Hellenore is carried off just like Helen was carried off from Troy. At least at first, Hellenore seems to be a willing collaborator, helping Paridell scheme to distract her husband with what he really loves best: his money.

Paridell and Hellenore make it out of the castle. Having put out the flames on his money, Malbecco is torn by grief at losing his wife and resolves to search for her, but she's too crafty to be caught.

Despite all his paranoia, Malbecco still lost all the things he was trying to keep, representing the dangers of trying to hold on to something too hard.

One day, Malbecco is out walking on the plain, and he sees a knight next to a lady and believes they must be Paridell and Hellenore. In fact, however, it is Braggadochio and Trompart.

This brief section indicates that in fact there's more to tell of Malbecco's story.

Braggadochio tries to intimidate Malbecco, but Malbecco says he is just a pilgrim looking for the knight who took his wife. He promises to reward Braggadochio if he helps him get his wife back. Braggadochio pretends not to be interested in wealth, but Trompart knows this is just an act.

Malbecco may not be the sharpest character, but he demonstrates here that he is still cunning enough to convince the gullible Braggadochio. As it turns out, however, Braggadochio may not be as gullible as he seems here.

Braggadochio says he'll help Malbecco get his wife, Hellenore, back (really he just wants the money), and Malbecco is overjoyed. Soon after, just by chance, Paridell starts coming toward them. They stop Paridell, but it turns out that shortly after taking Hellenore, he let her go, and she wandered off into a forest. There, some satyrs (mythical half-goat men) found her and made her their "housewife," forcing her to milk their goats and prepare food for them.

Paridell's lack of faith toward Hellenore shows what a worthless knight he is. Despite his redeeming qualities in battle, Paridell is too fickle to engage in the type of chaste courtly love that defines more virtuous knights.

Paridell departs, and Malbecco decides that rather than chase him, they'll head into the forest to look for Hellenore. Tricky Trompart warns Malbecco that the forest could contain many dangerous monsters. He says it would be best if Malbecco leaves his money somewhere safe, perhaps burying it or hiding it before going into the forest.

The irony of Malbecco's paranoia about losing his money is that it actually makes him more vulnerable to tricksters like Trompart. He illustrates the consequences of caring too much about material things.

Malbecco hides his money, then he, Braggadochio, and Trompart head into the forest to look for Hellenore. In the woods, they hear the bagpipes of the satyrs. Braggadochio gets frightened and flees, with Trompart close behind him, but Malbecco is too old to run that fast.

Malbecco doesn't realize it yet, but Braggadochio and Trompart always planned to betray him.

Malbecco sneaks his way into the edge of the satyr settlement and sees Hellenore garlanded with flowers, with satyrs dancing all around her. He gets out of his hiding place and disguises himself by walking like a goat-man. His trick works because he has such a goat-like beard. He follows the satyrs back as they go to sleep and is shocked and alarmed to see a satyr sleeping by Hellenore's side.

This scene is humorous because Malbecco disguises himself as a satyr only to realize that a satyr has taken his place, sleeping next to Hellenore as if he were her husband.

Malbecco wakes Hellenore up and tries to persuade her to come back, but she refuses, preferring to stay with the satyrs. He keeps trying to persuade her until morning, but then he gets afraid when the other satyrs wake up and decides to run off. He goes back to where he left his treasure but finds that Trompart has already taken it.

Hellenore was quick to leave her husband, and now she prefers the satyrs over him, suggesting that a man like Malbecco doesn't make for a very pleasant spouse (something that was demonstrated earlier when Malbecco went to save his money before trying to save Hellenore).

Malbecco is furious now that he's lost both his wife and his fortune. He tries to throw himself off a cliff, but so much of him has already been consumed that he lightly falls onto some rocks and isn't even hurt. There's a cave nearby, so he goes inside to investigate. He ends up living in that cave forever, eating toads and frogs and going by the new name of Jealousy.

Malbecco receives a concluding punishment fitting the sins he committed. By jealously guarding his wife and his fortune, he ended up losing both. Still unable to free himself of his sins, he goes into a cave to become Jealousy itself.

BOOK III: CANTO XI

The narrator laments the existence of foul Jealousy and praises instead the chaste love of Britomart. Shortly after leaving Malbecco's castle, she and Sir Satyrane start chasing Ollyphant (the even more greedy and lusty brother of the evil giantess Argante).

Jealousy is a corruption of love, and so it represents the opposite of the chaste love for her future husband that Britomart embodies.

Ollyphant doesn't fear Sir Satyrane—it's Britomart's chastity that makes him run away. Britomart follows him into some woods. There they see a knight on the ground with his equipment scattered everywhere. The knight, whose name is Scudamore, tells her about Amoretta, his love who has been taken captive by an evil man named Busirane.

Amoretta was introduced earlier as the twin sister of the fair huntress Belphoebe. They were separated at birth, and Amoretta was raised by Venus. Amoretta seems to be a virtuous woman, and so her kidnapping by Busirane is the sort of situation that any true knight would help with.

Scudamore is so upset that he looks like he's choking to death, so Britomart goes to comfort him. She pledges to help him against his foe and deliver Amoretta back to him. She tells Scudamore to get up and put his armor back on.

The theme of love as a physical disease continues. By telling Scudamore to put his armor back on, Britomart is telling him not to lose sight of the fact that he is a knight who is capable of taking action.

Britomart and Scudamore make their way to a castle where great fire and stinking sulfur prevent them from going in the gate. Scudamore laments that there's no way in, but Britomart just gets behind her **shield** and uses it to force her way through the flames. Scudamore tries to do something similar, but he gets scorched and is forced to turn back.

Britomart once again demonstrates that she is the strongest knight, even in the company of other strong knights, due to her steadfast faith (which is represented by the protection her shield gives her).

Inside the castle are portraits depicting many of Cupid's great conquests (mainly lustful stories from Greek and Roman mythology). At the front of the hall is an altar where there's a statue of blindfolded Cupid himself. Many people commit idolatry (the sin of worshipping something other than the Christian God, usually focused on an object or image) at this statue, asking for Cupid's help.

Although the pagan goddess Venus is a generally positive figure in this ostensibly Christian story, Cupid's role is more ambiguous, and he seems capable of causing both pure love and impure lust.

Britomart marvels at the castle interior, noting a door that has "Be bold" written over it. Inside are the broken weapons of powerful conquerors hanging on the walls. She notices other doors with "Be bold" written over them. Eventually, she comes to a room where the door reads "Be not too bold." She waits there until evening, keeping her weapon ready.

The progression from "Be bold" to "Be not too bold" recalls the virtue of temperance that was so important in Book II of the poem. Here, Britomart exercises good judgment by doing as the signs say.

BOOK III: CANTO XII

A stormy wind blows through the castle, but Britomart remains steadfast. The wind opens the door in front of her, showing a theater. A man whose robe says "Ease" in golden letters is acting as if he's in a play. Other musicians and bards surround Ease, and they begin to play strange, sweet music.

The wind that tries to blow Britomart in a certain direction is a personification of temptation, which is why Britomart tries so hard to resist it.

A show begins. The performers include Fancy, Desire, Doubt, Danger, Fear, Hope, Dissemblance, Suspect, Grief, Fury, Displeasure, Pleasance, Despight, and Cruelty. Cruelty's bare chest has a knife sticking out of it. After Cruelty, the winged god Cupid himself comes riding in on a lion. He is followed by a mob of monsters.

This relatively long section is a chance to display poetic technique. The show is intentionally strange and gruesome, mixing potentially positive attributes with ones that are unquestionably sinful, just as Cupid himself mixes pure love and lust.

Britomart tries to flee from the monster, but the doors are locked. They haven't seen her yet, so she decides to wait a day and see what happens. She decides to come out the next night. She is surprised to find the place deserted except for one woman who is chained to a pillar with an evil enchanter in front of her. It turns out the woman is Cruelty, who is actually Amoretta, and the enchanter tormenting her is Busirane.

The sudden disappearance of all the fanfare from before gives this section a dreamlike quality. It suggests that perhaps Cupid's influence is not as substantial as it seems, if it can go away so fast. The discovery of Amoretta brings the canto toward the climax of the book.

Busirane sees Britomart and goes to stab Amoretta, but Britomart stops him. They fight and she smites him down half-dead. Britomart tells Busirane that if he wants to live, he has to return Amoretta to her former state. Busirane agrees, and as he undoes his magic, the whole house shakes. The chains fall from around Amoretta, and the knife that was stuck in her breast comes out.

The knife sticking in Amoretta's chest is a cruel mockery of what real love (or perhaps heartbreak) can feel like. As an enchanter, Busirane is no match for a fighter like Amoretta and pleads for mercy almost immediately.

Amoretta praises Britomart for saving her and tries to thank her, but Britomart says she needs no reward. She binds Busirane so that he won't cause more trouble. They leave the castle, and it turns out the flames that used to be by the gate have died down.

As a knight, Britomart believes that helping people is a reward in itself and that knights who are only in it for glory or reward aren't very chivalrous.

In the 1596 revised version of Book XII's ending, Britomart goes outside with Amoretta and finds that Scudamore and his squire have left to go find their own way to help Amoretta, not realizing that Britomart would be successful. But in the version Spenser first published in 1590, Scudamore is still there, and he and Amoretta are joyfully reunited.

The revised version of the ending is slightly less happy than the original version, although both versions ultimately suggest that good knights like Britomart will triumph over evil opponents. In any case, the start of the next book makes the different endings of this book functionally the same.

BOOK IV: PROEM

The narrator reflects on how he's spent a lot of time recently praising love, perhaps too much time for some readers, but he asserts that true love is where honor and virtue come from—only cold-hearted people don't realize this. He once again says that he writes in praise of his queen.

One reason why the narrator might be hesitant to spend more time on love is because Queen Elizabeth never married or had a public love life, and too much focus on love could be seen as a criticism of her single status.

BOOK IV: CANTO I

The narrator summarizes how Britomart saved Amoretta from Busirane and brought her back to Scudamore, adding some new details to the story. For example, on the way back from the castle, a knight saw Britomart and Amoretta riding together, and the knight made a challenge to try to claim Amoretta for himself.

There was a long gap between the publication of Books I through III and Books IIII through VI, and so the recap here is particularly useful in establishing where the story will pick up.

While fighting, Britomart easily knocks the other knight off his horse. The knight is disappointed at first, but his disappointment becomes amazement when Britomart takes off her helm and reveals that she is a woman. Amoretta is also surprised and relieved because she wants to stay loyal to Scudamore even though Britomart has rightfully "won" her.

Until this moment, Amoretta likely assumed that she would have to become the lover of the knight that rescued her. Particularly for a modern reader, this suggests a darker underside to the supposedly heroic code of chivalry.

Happy to be saved by Britomart, that night Amoretta sleeps in the same bed with her. In the morning, they head out and come across two knights, each riding side-by-side with a lady. As it turns out, however, one of the ladies is false Duessa (the sorceress who appeared in previous books) and the other is Ate, who is known as the mother of all debate and disagreement.

The relationship between Britomart and Amoretta could be read as sexual, although this would potentially be out of character for someone as chastity-obsessed as Britomart. At the very least, it seems to be a parody of the typical relationship between a knight and a lady. Despite being defeated in the past, Duessa seems to show little desire to give up her trickster ways.

Ate has been a powerful force throughout history, leading to the downfall of everyone from the old Babylonian kings to Alexander the Great. Her face is ugly and she has a forked tongue that represents her lies because it goes in two different directions. She both speaks and hears in double. Her ultimate goal is to overthrow Concord, and along the way, she has been helping Duessa to hurt good knights.

Ate looks like a snake, something she shares with the female monster Error. She also has a lot in common with the hag Occasion, who also led knights to start fights. Ate's goal is even loftier than that of any previous characters—by overthrowing Concord, she wants everyone to be fighting all the time.

The knight with Ate is Blandamour, who is fickle and unreliable. The other knight, with Duessa, is Paridell (who carried off and then unceremoniously abandoned Hellenore in the previous book). Britomart, however, doesn't know about Paridell's falseness, so she greets him when they approach.

Just as virtuous knights like the Redcross Knight and Prince Arthur bonded over virtue, it seems here that unjust knights also stick together. In this case, what unites Blandamour with Paridell is their common fickleness.

Paridell and Blandamour are both enchanted by Amoretta, but soon Scudamore comes riding onto the scene. Paridell challenges Scudamore but gets knocked to the ground and badly injured. Blandamour promises revenge on Scudamore.

Because Paridell and Blandamour are so fickle, they fall in love with Amoretta as soon as they see her. Arguably, something similar happened for Scudamore, but the difference is he's been faithful, while they fall in love with each new woman they see.

Just then Duessa intervenes and tells the knights they have no reason to be angry at each other. She says that love must be freely given and not forced through mastery or domination. Ate, however, laughs at all the knights, saying that while they're all arguing over Amoretta, she is faithless and already loves someone else.

Although Duessa and Ate might seem to be making different arguments, in fact, they are both working together to say what they think will start an argument between the knights.

Scudamore accuses Ate of lying. Duessa, however, says that she did in fact see Amoretta kissing another knight. Although Duessa is lying, she succeeds in riling up Scudamore's anger against Britomart. Glauce (Britomart's nurse who is acting as her squire) tries to calm Scudamore down, but he responds by attacking her and nearly slaying her. He rages at Britomart for making Amoretta unfaithful. He brings his hand back to strike Britomart and only stops at the last moment.

Scudamore's love for Amoretta is pure, but Duessa and Ate find a way to use it against him, by weaponizing his love to make him suspicious of Britomart. His love is so strong that it leads him to hurt the innocent Glauce, although he does eventually come to his senses.

BOOK IV: CANTO II

Despite attempts by Blandamour and Paridell to keep stirring up an argument, Glauce's words finally calm Scudamore down. Soon another knight with a lady by his side comes riding by. His name is Sir Ferraugh, and the lady appears to be Florimell, but in fact it's the false Florimell who was travelling with Braggadochio.

Glauce's role for Britomart is similar to the role that the Palmer played for Sir Guyon, acting as an older and more experienced voice of reason. Here, she gets Scudamore to listen to her as well.

Fickle Blandamour decides that he wants "Florimell" (the disguised sprite) now. He attacks Sir Ferraugh and knocks him off his horse, claiming Florimell as his own. Paridell, who previously didn't care about Florimell, is jealous when he sees her up close and hears her alluring words.

Blandamour proves how worthless his love is by switching his affection from Amoretta to false Florimell so quickly. Paridell is perhaps even more fickle, motivated to want "Florimell" just because Blandamour wants her.

Paridell accuses Blandamour of being too boastful and says they made a promise earlier that they would equally share any spoils they came across. Blandamour takes offense, saying he won Florimell fairly and is prepared to defend his claim. Blandamour and Paridell start a fierce battle. They might have kept fighting each other forever if the Squire of Dames hadn't come along.

Unlike the true friendship of the Redcross Knight and Arthur, the friendship of Paridell and Blandamour breaks down at the first sign of disagreement, with the two of them literally fighting to the death over a woman they just met.

The Squire of Dames asks Paridell and Blandamour (who won't stop fighting) what the cause of their disagreement is. They both answer that it's the love of Florimell. The Squire of Dames argues that it would be better for them to join forces, so that they can better defend Florimell from any other knights who want to claim her. The squire informs them that other knights are seeking Florimell, and so at last, Paridell and Blandamour put aside their anger and decide to keep riding together.

The Squire of Dames, who previously took some liberties when interpreting the request of his lady, gives Paridell and Blandamour a suggestion that sounds somewhat reasonable but which is also unconventional, since knights didn't typically share ladies in formal arrangements.

Paridell, Blandamour, and the others run into Cambell and Triamond with their ladies, Cambine and Canacee. The narrator mentions that these two knights are actually characters from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and many stories of their wondrous deeds have been lost, so the narrator wants to revive them, hoping that he can do justice to Chaucer's spirit.

The whole poem The Faerie Queene *is written in a style that was archaic for the time when Spenser was writing and which was inspired in part by* Canterbury Tales. *One of the most noteworthy aspects of* Canterbury Tales *is how it had self-contained stories that spanned different genres, something that* The Faerie Queene *also does to an extent.*

Canacee is Cambell's sister, and she is loved by many knights for her wisdom. Cambell sensed that this could cause trouble, so they made an arrangement where one day all of Canacee's potential suitors would gather for a contest. When it was down to the top three, Cambell himself would face them, and whoever won would take his sister.

Cambell is referenced in the subtitle to Book IIII, suggesting that he is an important character, even though he ultimately doesn't take up a huge part of the story.

Cambell has a ring from Canacee that will stop mortal wounds from bleeding. In the knights who have come to challenge for Canacee, there are three brothers named Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond. Their mother, Agape, is a fairy who was raped by a knight while she was asleep.

Many knights have a protective item on them, and in the case of Cambell, his ring symbolizes his connection to his sister, which is what gives him strength.

One day, Agape begins to fear how her sons will die. She goes to the Fates, and is dismayed to see that the threads of their fates (representing the length of their lives) are very short. She asks the Fates for a favor: when the eldest dies, the rest of his life should be passed to the middle son, and when the middle son dies, the rest of his life should be passed to the youngest son. The Fates agree. From then on, the brothers do everything together, including falling in love with Canacee.

In mythology, prophecies like the ones given by the Fates are seldom wrong, but sometimes they come to pass in unexpected ways. The mother of the three knights asks for their bond to be made even stronger so that if any of them die, they will essentially share a soul.

BOOK IV: CANTO III

The day comes when Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond are set to fight with Cambell for Canacee. Cambell comes in first, looking confident. His first opponent is Priamond. The two begin to fight, and at first, it seems they're evenly matched. Priamond manages to strike a glancing blow on Cambell's shoulder, but he is shocked to see that the wound doesn't bleed. Cambell just gets angrier.

Tournaments are an important part of knighthood in this poem and a chance for knights to test their prowess against each other. Although some tournaments are friendly, this one is life or death.

Eventually, Cambell manages to kill Priamond, but his ghost doesn't fly directly to the underworld, going instead to Diamond. Though Diamond grieves the death of his brother, this doesn't stop him from taking up the fight against Cambell.

The predictions of the fates turn out to be correct as Priamond dies young, but the sudden flight of his ghost into Diamond suggests that the Fates also honored their promise.

Diamond and Cambell are also evenly matched, and the crowd wonders at their fiercely clashing axes. Finally, Diamond decides to end it one way or the other. He strikes a harsh blow that seems like it could rip Cambell's soul out of his body, but Cambell sees it coming and steps aside. Diamond is in a vulnerable position, and so Cambell chops his head off. Diamond's soul flies out and finds a new home in Triamond.

The brothers die in the order that their mother discussed with the Fates. The fact that Cambell is willing to kill knights just for attempting to win his sister suggests that knighthood could involve a brutal survival-of-the-fittest mentality at times.

Triamond is also full of grief but unwilling to give up the challenge against Cambell. They fight, and Triamond is amazed that Cambell can keep standing after so much fighting (since Triamond doesn't know about the magic ring). Nevertheless, Triamond lands many fierce blows that knock Cambell back.

With the souls of his two dead brothers to fortify him, Triamond is the strongest competitor that Cambell has faced yet.

As the fight drags on, however, Triamond becomes feeble from lack of blood, while Cambell stays strong. He uses his advantage to smite Triamond through the throat and seemingly kill him. But the crowd is amazed to see how, after seemingly dying, Triamond gets up again, as if waking from a dream. The fight continues with Cambell being more cautious.

Triamond's seeming death is prevented because he has three souls: his own, plus two from his dead brothers. This finally makes him a worthy opponent against Cambell and his ring of protection.

Triamond and Cambell both manage to strike each other so hard at the same time that it looks like each of them is dead. But to the surprise of everyone in the audience, each rises up again, fighting as if the battle has just begun. As the two are fighting, however, suddenly there's a loud noise. They look and see a chariot pulled by two lions coming forward.

The combined strikes of Triamond and Cambell at the same time suggest that the two of them are equally matched. Both would have died if not for their protection (Triamond from his brothers' souls, Cambell from his sister's ring).

On the chariot is a fair lady who is skilled in magic. The woman rides through the crowd, carrying in her right hand the rod of peace. It turns out she's Cambina, Triamond's sister. Cambina falls in love with Cambell, but Cambell and Triamond soon start fighting again. Cambina intervenes by hitting each of them with her rod, and suddenly instead of attacking each other, they kiss each other and become friends.

The story of Cambell and Triamond works out with a neat ending that ties up all the conflict. Cambell and Triamond become double brothers-in-law, cementing a friendship that was forged on the battlefield.

Canacee is delighted to see an end to the conflict. Triamond marries Canacee, and Cambell marries Cambina, and they all stay friends.

Despite the bloodshed earlier in the tournament, the canto has a harmonious ending.

BOOK IV: CANTO IV

Unlike the true friendship of Cambell and Triamond, the friendship of Blandamour and Paridell is false. When all of them and their ladies meet on the road, Blandamour insults Triamond and Cambell. Cambina, however, tries to keep the peace. She mentions that a tournament is coming up, where the winner will receive a **gold belt** (from the real Florimell). They all put aside their differences and agree to ride to the tournament.

The tournament for Florimell's golden belt will be an even bigger one than the tournament for Canacee's hand. Even less-than-great knights like Blandamour and Paridell show some respect to tournaments, which is why they agree to settle their differences there.

On the way to the tournament, they run into Braggadochio (who had false Florimell stolen from him by Sir Ferraugh). Braggadochio claims Florimell belongs with him, so Blandamour offers to fight him, with the winner getting Florimell but the loser being stuck with the hag Ate.

Braggadochio is a similar sort of knight to Blandamour and Paridell since, like them, he can't be trusted even when he gives his word of honor.

Braggadochio, however, feels that having the hag would be worse than nothing, and he doesn't want to fight. This causes the others to smile and treat him like a coward. Ate and false Florimell try to stir up discord, but Cambell says they should all save their strength for the tournament, and this gets everyone's approval.

Braggadochio proves himself again to be a coward, and the other knights insult him for it, although arguably Paridell and Blandamour are little better.

They make it to the tournament, where Sir Satyrane has the **gold belt** of the real Florimell. He takes up arms against a pagan knight named Bruncheual. A knight called Ferramont joins Satyrane's side, but Blandamour joins Bruncheual's.

Blandamour's willingness to join a pagan just because he sees a better chance of winning is a sign of his lack of any moral center.

Soon Paridell joins the fight. Braggadochio sees no need to get involved. Then Triamond enters the fray and wounds Ferramont, causing the knights Sir Devon, Sir Douglas, and Sir Paliumord to join the fight against Triamond, but they can't take Triamond down. Sir Satyrane sees an opportunity and wounds Triamond, who has to leave the battlefield.

Battles in the tournament get chaotic, with knights quickly forming and breaking alliances. Unlike Cambell's prior tournament, the knights here don't seem to be trying to slay each other.

The trumpets sound to indicate the end of the tournament for that day, and Sir Satyrane is judged the best so far. The tournament begins again the next day, but Triamond still is unable to rejoin because of his wound. Cambell agrees to take Triamond's place.

The tournament has a performative aspect to it, highlighting not necessarily which knight fought the hardest, but which knight won the favor of his peers.

Cambell and Sir Satyrane fight savagely on horseback. All of a sudden, Satyrane's horse rears and throws him off. Cambell also dismounts to fight, but he soon finds himself swarmed by other knights on Satyrane's side. Cambell doesn't give up, but it seems like he's going to be taken captive by his more numerous opponents. Triamond hears about this and forgets his wound, leaping up to put on his armor, but he finds that Cambell has taken his armor, so he throws on Cambell's armor.

The tournament battlefield provides an opportunity for Cambell and Triamond to display their new friendship. Triamond's concern for Cambell on the field of battle—even if it is just a tournament—shows the depth of his commitment to protecting his friend.

Triamond hacks away through the other knights to reach Cambell and free him. The trumpets sound again and everyone agrees the day's winners are Cambell and Triamond. Triamond tries to yield the victory to Cambell, but Cambell tries to say Triamond is the winner.

Cambell and Triamond are such good friends that neither one of them wants to claim the glory for the day, suggesting that their cooperation on the battlefield was rooted in real selflessness.

The next morning is the final day of the tournament, and Satyrane looks strong. Just then, a strange knight that no one recognizes enters the arena, wearing armor that looks like moss and leaves. This new knight, nicknamed the Savage Knight, is so strong that he immediately strikes down nine other knights. It turns out this new knight is Arthegall (the knight Britomart saw in her vision and fell in love with).

Britomart's visions with Merlin have already revealed that Arthegall is a powerful and just knight. He makes a dramatic entrance to the tournament, which is fitting for his high status as a knight.

Arthegall easily subdues Sir Satyrane and his knights and seems likely to claim victory, but just as evening is coming, another strange knight enters. This new knight knocks Arthegall off his horse. Cambell and Triamond both try to confront the new knight and are also knocked down. Blandamour tries too and is also defeated. It turns out the new knight is Britomart, still wielding her enchanted spear. Britomart wins the tournament and everyone goes to a feast.

Fittingly, soon after Arthegall arrives, his future wife Britomart also shows up. As is often the case, most observers believe that Britomart is a man until she takes off her helmet. Her victory in the tournament, particularly over such powerful knights, can be seen as a symbolic win for the power of Britain, which she represents.

BOOK IV: CANTO V

Florimell's **gold belt** gives its owner the virtue of chaste love, but it can only be worn by a worthy woman. The belt once belonged to the goddess Venus herself.

Florimell's gold belt is like the enchanted shields and weapons that knights bring into battle, except because she doesn't need to fight, it instead gives her the power to love better.

At the tournament, everyone judges that Sir Satyrane won the first day, Triamond won the second, and Britomart won the third, as well as winning overall. Arthegall is unhappy about this outcome and vows vengeance one day.

Arthegall's pledge of vengeance is ironic because in fact, Britomart is not his enemy and will eventually become his wife.

Next up is a contest to judge the beauty of all the ladies present. Cambina (who is with Cambell), Canacee (who is with Triamond), Duessa (who is with Paridell), and Amoretta (who is with Britomart) are all in contention, but the most impressive participant is false Florimell (who is with Blandamour), who looks even fairer than the real Florimell some of them know. She is awarded the **gold belt**.

The humorous part of this contest is that out of all the available women, a sprite disguised as a woman wins the top prize. This section is perhaps a commentary on how sometimes falseness can be more appealing than even the real thing, at least on a superficial level.

When false Florimell tries to wear the **gold belt**, however, it keeps slipping off her. She gets embarrassed. Other ladies also try to fasten the belt on themselves with no luck. This causes the Squire of Dames to laugh, since it means all these ladies are unvirtuous. At last, Amoretta manages to successfully wear the belt.

False Florimell's inability to wear the belt suggests that she is unsuitable for it and the belt is rejecting her. The failures of so many other ladies at the tournament suggests that perhaps chaste love is rare indeed and so should be valued.

Fake Florimell has nevertheless been voted most beautiful and awarded to Britomart. But since Britomart doesn't want her, she is awarded to Arthegall, who has apparently already left in anger. She's then passed to Triamond, who stays loyal to his wife, and finally ends up with Sir Satyrane, who happily accepts her because he believes that this fake Florimell is the real one he lost earlier.

The Faerie Queene *celebrates the rituals of medieval knights, but in sections like this, it also parodies them. Fake Florimell is passed down from knight to knight, all of whom don't want her, suggesting that many knights were fighting only for the glory, or perhaps without even realizing what they were fighting for.*

Blandamour, Paridell, and Braggadochio are not happy with this outcome, however, and start arguing, their anger fueled in part by Ate. Wishing to avoid more violence, Satyrane suggests placing Florimell (really false Florimell) in the center of all of them and letting her choose who she wants to be with. They do so, and Florimell ends up going to Braggadochio.

Satyrane's willingness to give up fake Florimell shows that he is more devoted to the spirit of competition than to the prize at the end. It also shows how little agency many women had at the time, as fake Florimell is literally passed around like a prize.

Braggadochio takes false Florimell away in the middle of the night, and some of the other knights pursue him. Britomart continues on her own adventure seeking her love but not realizing that it's Arthegall and that she's already made him an enemy. Though Britomart is glad to have a virtuous companion like Amoretta, Amoretta still longs to be reunited with Scudamore.

As the tournament ends, each of the characters gets back to what they were doing before the tournament. Britomart's dedication to Arthegall and to helping Amoretta stands in contrast to Braggadochio's cowardly sneaking away at night with fake Florimell.

Scudamore himself, however, seeks vengeance against Britomart because he jealously believes that she has made Amoretta unfaithful (despite Glauce's insistence that that's not the case). Scudamore and Glauce travel together until a terrible storm forces them to seek shelter in a little cottage by some steep hills. Inside the cottage, they meet a blacksmith named Care who works night and day.

Scudamore remains mistaken about Britomart, still misled by the strength of his own love for Amoretta. Glauce tries to talk sense into him, as she successfully did once in the past, but Scudamore is too determined to listen to her.

Care has six servants in his workshop, including one who is a giant. Scudamore admires all the work he sees and asks what's going on, but no one will answer him. Eventually Scudamore realizes he's exhausted after so much adventure and lays down to sleep in his armor. He doesn't get much rest, however, because he keeps hearing hammers on anvils or the bellows flaring up.

Care, the blacksmith who always bangs around and doesn't let guests sleep, is a personification of how the emotional state of caring also sometimes interrupts people's sleep.

At last, even the noise isn't enough to keep Scudamore awake. He drifts into sleep, only to dream about Care burning him in the side with red-hot tongs. His heart quakes with pain. He spends the whole night restless like this before getting onto his horse the next day and riding off for more adventure with Glauce.

Even in his dreams, Scudamore can't escape Care, providing a visual demonstration of how cares can haunt people even in the seeming safety of their dreams.

BOOK IV: CANTO VI

After leaving Care's workshop, Scudamore feels melancholy as he rides the next day. He happens to run into another knight and they almost fight, but the other knight apologizes and asks for Scudamore's pardon. He says he's called the Savage Knight (which was a nickname of Arthegall during the tournament in Canto IV).

Scudamore's chance meeting with Arthegall lays the groundwork for how Arthegall will eventually meet up with Britomart and learn her true identity. Arthegall's reputation as the Savage Knight may seem odd for someone heroic, but it's appropriate, since much of Book V involves Arthegall dealing out a very harsh version of justice.

Arthegall talks about being defeated in a tournament recently by a knight with an enchanted spear, and Scudamore realizes that knight must be Britomart. Arthegall and Scudamore realize they have a common enemy and both vow revenge.

This scene is ironic because while Arthegall and Scudamore both have reasons to believe Britomart is their enemy, in fact, she will be an ally to both of them.

Arthegall and Scudamore ride and eventually come across Britomart. Scudamore charges her first but gets knocked down off his horse. Seeing this only motivates Arthegall to try harder, but he too is shocked to be knocked off his horse. From the ground, he manages to strike the back of Britomart's horse, causing her to dismount, too.

Britomart once again proves her strength in battle. Scudamore in particular acts recklessly due to his passion for Amoretta, and so he is the easier one to dispatch.

Britomart is equally strong with just her sword, pushing Arthegall back and wounding him. The two continue to go back and forth, not realizing each other's identities. Finally, Arthegall works up the strength to deliver what he believes will be a fatal blow. The blow doesn't harm her, but it knocks her helmet off, and for the first time, Arthegall sees her fair face.

Britomart's prowess with her sword confirms that she wasn't just winning fights because of her enchanted lance. Arthegall is also strong, though—fittingly, the two characters who will eventually be matched in love seem to also be matched in battle.

All of a sudden Arthegall feels his desire for vengeance leave him, and it's like he's paralyzed. He drops his sword and goes down on his knees before Britomart. Britomart is still angry from being struck and commands Arthegall to either rise and fight or be killed. But Arthegall just asks for pardon and says she can do what she likes.

The big reveal of Britomart's identity causes a total change in Arthegall's manner toward her. As Arthegall still has his own helmet on, Britomart doesn't know yet that he's the man she saw in Merlin's mirror.

Scudamore sees Britomart's true identity and is also amazed. Glauce is happy to see a break in the fighting and asks Arthegall and Scudamore to reveal themselves to Britomart. They do so, and Britomart is surprised to realize she has seen Arthegall's face before in Merlin's mirror. She also drops her weapon.

The sudden stop to the fight between Arthegall and Britomart suggests that many fights are based on misunderstandings, and when people see the truth, they are less likely to want to fight.

Scudamore says that he's glad to see Arthegall doesn't scorn all women. At hearing Arthegall's name, Britomart is now so amazed that she goes into a fit. Glauce explains to Arthegall that while Britomart has conquered land and sea, she is chaste and won't rebel against love. Glauce asks both Arthegall and Britomart to put aside their anger for the sake of love.

Despite being a powerful warrior, even Britomart has her weaknesses, and the fits she experiences in this passage are similar to the fainting spells Una had in book I. Even with all her strength, she remains committed to the idea of chaste love.

Britomart and Arthegall agree not to fight and begin to feel passion for each other. Meanwhile, Scudamore is still worried about his Amoretta, so he asks Britomart if she has any news. Britomart says she isn't sure; after saving Amoretta from Duessa, and traveling with her for a while, one day Britomart woke up and Amoretta wasn't there.

The happy reunion of Britomart and Arthegall contrasts with Scudamore's distress upon learning that Amoretta isn't with Britomart anymore. Just as one story seems to end happily, another one still hangs in the balance.

Scudamore is disappointed and scared to hear of Amoretta's disappearance. Britomart promises to help him find her and to enact vengeance on whoever took her away, which cheers Scudamore up a little. Arthegall leads them all to a castle where they can tend their wounds and rest.

Britomart's loyalty to helping Scudamore, even after she has completed her own main quest as a knight, shows the depth of her devotion to chivalry and cooperation with other knights.

During their time recovering, Arthegall begins to woo Britomart. He makes promises to be faithful, and she confesses that she also loves him. They make plans to marry, but first Arthegall must finish a quest that he's already committed to. Britomart is sad but lets him go. Eventually, she, Scudamore, and Glauce head back to the forest where Britomart last saw Amoretta when she fell asleep.

Arthegall's devotion to his quest, even above Britomart, recalls how in Book I, the Redcross Knight had to make a similar decision to temporarily leave Una. Although true love is one of a knight's highest purposes, it seems that duty is even more important.

BOOK IV: CANTO VII

The narrator laments how Cupid's arrows can bring down even the greatest: it happened to Florimell, it happened to Britomart, and now it's about to happen to Amoretta. After leaving the tournament, Britomart and Amoretta are traveling through the woods when, all of a sudden, Amoretta finds herself snatched up off the ground.

Arrows can literally bring a person down, and so Cupid's arrows follow the pattern of treating love as something physical, personifying love (or perhaps sometimes lust) as a force strong enough to cut people down.

Amoretta's captor is a wild-looking "savage" man with hair everywhere and huge teeth who is known only as the carle (similar to churl, a rude person). He wears nothing except a green loincloth as he carries her through the forest. Suddenly he drops her off in a very dark part of the forest. Amoretta isn't sure whether she's even still alive, but then she hears someone else crying.

The description of the carle here is based on the era's racist stereotypes of people who lived outside of Europe. The character, who doesn't even have a name, lacks any sort of connection to noble blood, and so this means he is one of the least moral characters in the story.

The other captive cries that she has been imprisoned by an evil carle who deflowers chaste women, then eats them—the captive has already seen it happen seven times. She is the daughter of a high lord who fell in love with a squire who was of a lower status. One day, she went to meet the squire but instead found the carle, who tied her up and took her away. She reveals that her name is Aemylia.

The sexual hunger of the carle once again reflects stereotypes common in Spenser's Britain about "savages" who lived outside it. Perhaps the carle's cannibalism is also a parody of Catholics, who were sometimes criticized as "cannibals" by Protestants (due to different beliefs about the Eucharist, where Catholics believe that the bread literally becomes the body of Christ, while Protestants believe the bread is symbolic).

Amoretta pities Aemylia but asks how she's been able to hold on to her own honor for so long. Aemylia says there is an older woman who volunteers herself to be ravaged by the carle whenever he's feeling lustful in order to protect Aemylia.

This section establishes what a dangerous situation Amoretta has found herself in and builds up tension for the next parts.

Soon, the carle comes back, and Amoretta decides she's going to run. She flees through the forest with the carle chasing her. As it turns out, she's in the same forest where Belphoebe was being chased by Timias (Arthur's squire) earlier. Just as Amoretta is overtaken by the carle, Timias sees them and intervenes.

Amoretta's choice to flee is one of the more active decisions made by a damsel character in the story, perhaps motivated by the extreme danger she's in. Although as this section shows, she will also need some help being rescued.

Timias and the carle fight, with the "savage" man using his club and even using Amoretta as a human **shield**. But Timias manages to injure the man, and he throws Amoretta down. While the battle is going on, Belphoebe hears it and heads toward it, readying her bow.

The carle uses dirty tactics, even less honorable than what bad knights use, firmly establishing him as one of the evilest characters in the story.

The carle believes Belphoebe will be the cause of his death, so he flees back to his den. Belphoebe chases after him, then shoots an arrow through his neck that kills him. She frees his prisoners from the den and heads back to Amoretta and Timias. When she gets back, she finds Timias kissing Amoretta and tending to her wounds. She scolds Timias for being unfaithful to her, then leaves.

Belphoebe's own chastity makes her a fitting figure to slay the lustful carle. It isn't clear if she knows that Amoretta is her twin sister (since they were separated at birth when Diana and Venus each took one of them to adopt).

Timias tries to follow after Belphoebe, but she threatens him with arrows. He retreats to a solitary place and decides to break all of the weapons he's carrying with him. He grows out his hair and only eats forest berries and drinks running water.

Timias is generally a virtuous figure, but he lacks the experience of a true knight like Arthur, and this is what allows him to be tempted from loyalty to Belphoebe.

One day, Prince Arthur happens to come by seeking adventure, having heard of a hermit that lives in a cabin in the woods. He goes to the cabin and finds a wretched-looking man who doesn't speak, so Arthur doesn't recognize him as Timias. Arthur thinks he can see signs of a great man underneath the rude exterior. He looks around and sees that every tree in the area has Belphoebe engraved into it. Arthur leaves, hoping that one day the hermit man will be restored to his former grace.

Unlike evil characters in the story, however, Timias recognizes when he does something wrong and spends a lot of time doing penance. The extent of Timias's penance—living as a hermit in the woods for such a long period of time—may seem excessive, but it fits with the pattern of knights always trying to outdo each other, whether in tournaments of combat or in loyalty to their ladies.

BOOK IV: CANTO VIII

Timias continues to live in penance for his unfaithfulness to Belphoebe. One day, a turtle dove happens to visit him. The bird sings and seems to be carrying its own sorrows. Timias ties a ruby that he got from Belphoebe around the bird with a ribbon. The turtle dove then flies away, upsetting Timias at first, but the bird travels to Belphoebe.

The dove has a lot of symbolic significance in Christianity. Maybe the most notable appearance of a dove is in the Biblical story of Noah's ark, where Noah sends out a dove and it comes back with an olive branch. The olive branch was a sign that the flood was about to stop and God was no longer angry with humanity, and so the dove here is Timias's way of sending out a message to see if Belphoebe's anger with him will soon end.

Belphoebe recognizes the ruby and the ribbon around the turtle dove. She tries to get the jewel back and ends up following the bird all the way back to Timias. She doesn't recognize him, but he kneels down to kiss the ground she walks on. Belphoebe asks what has made the man so wretched. Timias informs her that actually it's her fault. Belphoebe says she regrets her quick judgment earlier and welcomes Timias back. They live happily together for a long time.

Again, the wretchedness of Timias's condition may seem excessive—Belphoebe doesn't even recognize him. His extreme contrition maybe isn't a literal guide for what all good Christians should do, but rather a metaphorical way to show what great lengths a Christian should be willing to go to in order to repent of past sins.

Arthur, however, is still adventuring in the forest and doesn't hear the good news about his former squire Timias. He happens to come to a place in the woods where Aemylia and Amoretta are staying. He is moved because both of them seem seriously injured after escaping the carle's den. He gives them a liquor to cure them. They explain how they were saved by a virgin (Belphoebe) who killed the carle but then left before they could discover her identity.

Characters in the poem are often just missing each other or not recognizing each other. At the same time, other characters show up to the rescue at exactly the moment when they're needed. In ancient stories, like the epic poems that inspired The Faerie Queene, *this could be viewed as the work of the gods or the Fates, although in a Christian poem, it more likely represents the mysterious workings of one God.*

Arthur wants to find the virgin, so he, Amoretta, and Aemylia go looking. They come to a cottage where a foul-looking old woman named Sclaunder lives. She lives to abuse good people with poison words ("slandering" them, similar to her name). Arthur and the others stay with Sclaunder that evening, but she is a bad host who yells at them for staying without her consent.

Slander is a topic that comes up on several occasions, always associated with evil characters. Knights in the poem are very concerned with their reputations, and slander is particularly dangerous because it means even good knights can end up with bad reputations.

The narrator interrupts to note how, on the surface, it might seem improper for Arthur to be alone with two gentle ladies. But he says it's like ancient times, when the lion would lie down peacefully next to the lamb.

There are several Biblical passages that mention a peaceful future where a predator animal will lie down next to a prey animal without eating it. Like the Biblical imagery, Arthur's self-control contrasts with the carle's libido.

The next morning, Arthur, Amoretta, and Aemylia leave, but Sclaunder follows after them, shouting insults, until at last she has to turn around. The three of them come across a squire (Placidas) riding with a dwarf. The squire is calling for help because they are being chased by a big man riding a dromedary camel. The man (Corflambo) has evil eyes like a Basilisk that can kill from a distance.

Sclaunder follows after Arthur trying to slander him because he was sleeping alone with two supposedly chaste women. The implication is that she is trying to slander him and ruin his reputation by saying he had sex, which is why in the previous section, the narrator made sure to clarify that there was nothing improper about what Arthur did.

Arthur goes to fight the man with the evil eyes. After a short battle, he ends up chopping the man's head off. The man's tongue continues to say blasphemies for a little while even after the head has been removed. The squire is amazed, saying that this giant man was named Corflambo and had conquered nations with his deadly gaze, never having been defeated before.

As with many other evil characters, the head is often the root of their sinfulness, and so the hero wins by beheading the villain. For Corflambo, his deadly eyes were the source of his power, which is why he got beheaded. Even after the beheading, he keeps blaspheming, suggesting that evil runs deep and its effects are hard to control.

The squire explains that Corflambo has a daughter named Poeana who seems fair but isn't as virtuous as she is beautiful. He then tells about a squire who loved a woman above him named Aemylia and how he went to meet her one day but was instead taken prisoner by the giant Corflambo.

Poeana is yet another woman who seems fair on the surface but is really just trying to trick men. The sheer number of deceptive women in the poem helps to emphasize the virtue of the women capable of true chaste love.

The squire, whose name is Placidas, continues his story about the other squire, whose name is Amyas: While in captivity, Amyas was often visited by Poeana. He pretended to love her as a way to get out but secretly remained faithful to his Aemylia. Placidas and Amyas look similar, so one day when he is sneakily visiting Amyas, he gets caught and thrown in prison, too. With them both in prison, Placidas pretends to be his friend so that he can woo Poeana (who likes Amyas), and Amyas doesn't have to feel guilty about betraying Aemylia.

There are a couple self-contained stories like the one here about Placidas and Amyas that often involve trickery and mistaken identity. Such stories have ancient roots, but for Spenser, one of the biggest influences would have been Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, *which is full of short, self-contained stories involving deception and impersonation.*

Placidas, because he is favored by Poeana (who still believes he's Amyas), has enough freedom to eventually make his own escape, grabbing the dwarf (who served Corflambo) and riding out. He was soon chased by Corflambo himself, however, which is what was happening when Arthur found them. Aemylia comes over and recognizes Placidas, asking if Amyas is still alive. Placidas confirms that he is, although he's still imprisoned. He tells her everything.

Placidas shows great ingenuity in how he managed to escape the prison of the giant Corflambo. This, combined with his dedication to helping his friend, suggest that he is a virtuous character. Book IIII focuses on friendship, and Placidas is the perfect demonstration of this virtue.

BOOK IV: CANTO IX

The narrator praises friendship, which, though different from love, is similar and virtuous in its own way. Arthur decides that he wants to help Placidas help his good friend Amyas, who is still imprisoned with Poeana. They take Corflambo's lifeless body and stick it back on the camel, then put his head back on top to use as a decoy, then they force the dwarf to help lead them back.

The loyalty and friendship that Placidas shows to Amyas ends up being contagious and convinces Arthur to get involved, too. This section shows how virtuous behavior in one person can create an example that inspires others.

They make it to the prison where Poeana is singing so sweetly about her sorrow that at first Arthur is captivated before he comes to his senses. Arthur sneaks up and captures her. At first, Poeana sees Placidas and thinks he'll save her, but she soon realizes she's been betrayed.

Poeana is described more sympathetically than some of the other tricky female characters in the story—even Arthur is temporarily enchanted by her.

Finally, Amyas is let out of prison, and both Placidas and Aemylia run to greet him. Arthur then leads them as they ransack Poeana's castle, which turns out to be full of hoarded treasure. Arthur eventually frees Poeana, but she can no longer take pleasure in her castle's remaining riches, having lost both her father (Corflambo) and her lover (Amyas, though she mistook Placidas for him).

Although it might not seem noble for knights like Arthur to ransack a castle, Corflambo seems to have gotten his wealth through stealing and greed. Poeana's lack of interest in material things is the start of a redemption story for her.

Arthur speaks to Poeana and convinces her to put aside her proud and lusty ways. He then asks Placidas to overlook Poeana's past sins. They end up married and live together in peace in Corflambo's old castle.

While it might seem surprising that Poeana gets redeemed, particularly since other evil characters often face harsh justice, Poeana was always slightly more sympathetic than other evil characters, and occasionally forgiveness becomes more important in the poem than justice.

Arthur rides on with Amoretta. Eventually, they cross paths with a troop of six riders: false Florimell, Braggadochio, a knight named Druon who loves being a bachelor, Claribell, Blandamour, and Paridell. The four knights in the group are brawling over false Florimell. Near these knights, Britomart and Scudamore are watching the scene unfold.

Fickle knights like Braggadochio, Blandamour, and Paridell seem to be stuck in a cycle, fighting again over false Florimell. They illustrate how sin can be a trap that prevents people from ever being satisfied with what they have.

The fight goes back and forth, with Paridell sometimes siding with Blandamour, other times siding with Druon. But when the knights notice Britomart, who embarrassed them all at the recent tournament, they all turn against her and Scudamour. As they attack, they ignore Britomart's attempts to reason with them.

Paridell's constant switching sides is humorous and once again confirms that he is the ficklest out of all the knights. The cowardly knights are only willing to face Britomart because they have her outnumbered.

Seeing that it's not a fair fight, Arthur joins on Britomart's side. The other knights are so angry that they start attacking Arthur, too, but he is fresh and ready to fight. They explain to Arthur how Britomart foiled them in the tournament, but Arthur says they are bringing shame to knighthood by their rash actions.

Arthur often acts as a judge character in the story, much like the similarly named Arthegall, who embodies the virtue of justice in Book V. Although Arthur isn't familiar with the situation, he can instantly see that Britomart is on the virtuous side of the argument.

Britomart says she has lost her former love, a gentle maid (meaning Amoretta), and Scudamore regrets Amoretta's loss even more. (Though Amoretta was with Arthur, she's not at the scene of the battle.) Claribell asks Scudamore to tell the story of his love for Amoretta, and though he initially hesitates to do so because it'll be painful, Britomart encourages him, and so he starts.

Some elements of the poem are unclear, such as why Amoretta wouldn't be with Arthur here. Other important actions happen "off the page," such as when Braggadochio steals Sir Guyon's horse. While it is possible that some of these elements are oversights or continuity errors, such events that happen "outside" the poem also help contribute to its epic scope.

BOOK IV: CANTO X

Scudamore begins his tale by saying that love and suffering are often intertwined, but he will gladly endure any trials he must for the sake of his love and hopes that others can learn from his story. He tells of how he went abroad seeking glory, ending up at a temple of Venus on an island. The temple holds the great **shield** of Love, but it's guarded in a castle by 20 knights.

Stories within stories have been a literary trope since the time of the Greek poet Homer, who is a major influence on Spenser, and were also popular with one of Spenser's more recent influences, Geoffrey Chaucer.

The **shield** of Love hangs on a marble column, and written in gold near it is the message that whoever possesses the shield will also possess fair Amoretta. Scudamore is eager to get the shield, so he challenges one of the knights on guard and knocks him off his horse. Eventually the rest of the 20 knights spring up, but Scudamore defeats them, too.

The focus on a shield in this story represents how Scudamore is focused not just on fighting for Amoretta but ultimately on taking up the responsibility of acting as a protector for her.

Scudamore claims the **shield**, then continues to a gate where the porter at the door is a man named Doubt, who has a double face—one looking forward and one looking backward, like the god Janus. With him is a woman named Delay. Doubt lets Scudamore in, but Delay tries to stop him. Scudamore, however, ignores her and heads deeper into the castle.

Scudamore's ability to claim the shield means that he has proven himself worthy of becoming Amoretta's protector in love. Nevertheless, the aptly named Doubt and Delay represent obstacles that he still has to face before Amoretta is finally his.

The next gate is guarded by a hideous giant named Danger. Most warriors turn back when they see Danger, but Scudamore decides that instead of retreating or trying to sneak between the giant's legs, he'll face Danger head on. Seeing the magic **shield** of Love, Danger lets Scudamore go in without a fight.

This section praises the virtue of bravery. While Danger is enough to scare most knights off, Scudamore doesn't flinch, and he soon finds out that Danger isn't nearly so dangerous as it appears to be.

The inside of the island is an idyllic paradise where lots of fresh plants grow. Scudamore sees places for lovers to walk but also places for a different sort of "lovers" who are bound by true friendship. Eventually he reaches a woman in front of Venus's temple named Concord, who is the mother of the twins Peace and Friendship. Concord is flanked on each side by two brothers: the elder brother, Hate, and the younger brother, Love.

Concord was mentioned briefly earlier as the enemy of Ate (the old hag who tried to stir up arguments between good knights). Everything about Venus's temple suggests a sense of harmony, and the presence of Peace and Friendship makes it clear that this version of Venus represents much more than just romantic love.

Concord invites Scudamore to come into the inner temple. There are many altars in the temple, but the most incredible thing is a statue of Venus, which has at its feet a shiny precious stone worth more than gold or any other object known to man. The statue is covered in a veil, for reasons that have been lost to history, though it might be to hide the fact that she's both a woman and a man, a father and a mother at the same time.

While The Faerie Queene *is famous for being very literal with its themes, there are still strange and mysterious elements to the poem such as the unexplained veil that covers Venus. The possible androgyny of Venus suggests the totality of the love she represents, which is not just for women but for all humanity.*

Around the statue are many lovers, either complaining of their problems or offering thanks for their good fortune. Scudamore begins murmuring a soft prayer to Venus. He notices some women nearby. Womanhood is their leader, and Shamefastness, Cheerfulness, Modesty, Courtesy, Silence, and Obedience are also there. Sitting on Womanhood's lap is Amoretta herself.

The solemn nature of the rituals conducted in Venus's temple demonstrate how sacred a place it is. Large parts of this poem are dedicated to faithful women and chaste love, and this temple is a sort of inner sanctum dedicated to chaste love. The womanly virtues listed here suggest a view of gender where the "ideal" woman is one who is meek and subservient.

As soon as Scudamore sees Amoretta, his heart begins to throb. While it seems sacrilegious to him to interrupt, he goes to touch her hand. Womanhood rebukes him for being too bold. He shows her, however, that he wields the **shield** of Love, which appeases Womanhood.

As is often the case, Scudamore is a noble knight but he sometimes gets too eager in his passion. The shield, which can be seen as his pledge to protect Amoretta, helps prove to Womanhood that he is worthy of Amoretta's love.

Amoretta asks for Scudamore to let go of her hand, sometimes crying, sometimes smiling, but he doesn't. He leads her out of the temple and ends his story.

The story ends with Scudamore claiming Amoretta as his own, again reflecting a view of gender where men were often expected to be very possessive of ladies.

BOOK IV: CANTO XI

Meanwhile, the real Florimell has been in Proteus's dungeon this whole time. She spent seven months in a dungeon so dark that she couldn't tell night from day, all because she loved Marinell (the knight by the shore), who doesn't love any woman (because he was told a woman would be his downfall).

Florimell's story is meant to inspire pity. She is among the most innocent characters in the story, and yet her situation keeps going from bad to worse as she finds herself at the mercy of people who want to do her harm.

Marinell is still suffering from a wound that Britomart gave him during their battle. His mother the nymph has tried many herbs and other methods to cure him, with no luck. Eventually Tryphon, the surgeon of the sea gods, gives her a whistle made from a shell, which she uses to call a leech that heals Marinell's pain.

The Faerie Queene *was written well before the birth of modern medicine, and so using leeches to draw blood out of sick people was still the height of medical technology not just in medieval times, when the poem is set, but also in Elizabethan times, when it was written.*

A great feast is held with all the sea gods to celebrate the marriage of Medway and Thames. (They both have the same names as rivers in England, with the Thames being the river that runs through London.) The feast takes place at Proteus's house.

Despite kidnapping Florimell, Proteus is also a gracious host. Like many Greek and Roman gods, his ways of working could be mysterious, and he often placed his own priorities over the welfare of mortals.

The guest list at the feast is so long and illustrious that the narrator calls on Clio, a Muse who was nursed by Memory, in order to remember everyone. Starting with the great sea god Neptune and his wife Amphitrite, the guests include many other notable figures from the sea. Some are sons of Neptune, like Albion, while others are the namesakes of rivers, like Nile, Ganges, and Euphrates.

This long section has little to do with the plot of the poem but provides a chance for Spenser to set a scene and show off poetic technique.

The list of guests continues with many of the guests bearing the names of rivers in England, as well as Irish rivers like the Liffey. Following the rivers are many, many sea nymphs. After listing off so many guests, the narrator says he has tired himself out and must switch over to the next Canto.

In the poem, not only are vices and virtues personified as people, but even rivers get a similar treatment. Even the narrator seems to recognize what a tangent this whole canto is, as he comments on how tired he's gotten from listing so many guests.

BOOK IV: CANTO XII

Even after listing so many wedding guests at Proteus's house, the narrator says he left off several names. At the wedding is also Marinell's mother the nymph Cymoent (also sometimes called Cymodoce), but Marinell's father is mortal and so the half-mortal Marinell must stay outside the god's house. As he's walking outside the house, he hears a piteous voice.

Although the wedding at Proteus's house may not have seemed important to the plot in the previous canto, here it becomes clear how it will lead to a resolution in the story of Marinell and Florimell.

The voice (which belongs to Florimell), complains about how the seas delight in spoiling mortal lives. She says that though waves can pierce rocks, nothing can pierce the heart of the god who is keeping her prisoner. She wishes that she could see her love, Marinell, again. Marinell hears this and realizes he's been hard-hearted toward Florimell. He decides to break her out of her prison.

The fact that Marinell is there right when Florimell is talking about him is yet another dramatic moment of coincidence (or perhaps destiny) in the poem. The physical prison that Florimell is in also represents the metaphorical prison that she feels like she's in without her love Marinell.

Marinell tries to think of a way to help Florimell but no matter what option he chooses, the obstacles seem too great to overcome. He sees the feast is ending and worries that he'll have to leave her there alone. He returns home with his mother, Cymoent, but remains tormented by thoughts of Florimell.

Marinell is just a mortal, and despite his strength as a knight, he has no power on his own to oppose a god as mighty as Proteus, particularly not during a feast full of other gods.

Marinell begins to wither away, losing his strength, which upsets his mother. She doesn't know the cause of her son's sorrows and thinks maybe it is still related to his wound, so she goes back to the surgeon god Tryphon. Tryphon assures her the old wound is healed and that Marinell has been afflicted with some new malady. This doesn't satisfy Marinell, so she calls Apollo, who is the god of medicine.

Marinell's physical lovesickness for Florimell is like Britomart's lovesickness for Arthegall. "Mental health" wasn't really a concept until long after the poem was written, but there was nevertheless some understanding that emotional states could have an effect on physical health.

Apollo says that whatever ails Marinell is in his mind and that it's probably love. Cymoent is upset about this at first, but eventually she tries to convince Marinell to tell her which nymph he loves. He admits that he loves Florimell, and Cymoent is upset because Proteus told her that Marinell's downfall will happen because of a maiden.

Given that Proteus is currently imprisoning Florimell, it is reasonable to question whether Proteus's prophecy really has any truth to it, or whether he only gave the prophecy to fulfill his own selfish purposes. In any case, the prophecy already came true when Britomart severely wounded Marinell.

Cymoent decides that Proteus is just the messenger of her bad news and she knows he is keeping Florimell prisoner, so she goes directly to Neptune to take up the issue. She explains the situation and Neptune agrees that Proteus must release Florimell.

Neptune is a rank above Proteus and so even a god as powerful as Proteus would not dare to disobey an order from Neptune.

Proteus doesn't dare contradict an order from Neptune, and so he lets Florimell go. Marinell sees Florimell, and immediately his heavy heart is lifted. He is weak from his period of lovesickness, but soon his strength begins to return. Florimell is sad to see him looking weak but hides it in order to keep up the joyful mood.

Proteus, despite treating Florimell poorly, is a god, and so is perhaps immune to some of the consequences of immorality that a mortal might face. The ending of the book is surprisingly bittersweet, with the happy ending offset by Florimell's recognition of Marinell's weakened state.

BOOK V: PROEM

The narrator laments that compared to the antique world, the modern world is corrupted and lacking in virtue. In fact, right and wrong have flip-flopped, and what was once called wrong is now called right. One of the old virtues was justice, and so the narrator offers up a poem in praise of Arthegall, who was an instrument of justice in the world.

The narrator's longing for the past makes sense, given that the whole poem is written in an archaic language and deals with events set in the past. This might seem to contradict the poem's stated goal of praising Queen Elizabeth (the present ruler), but the poem often finds ways of connecting her rule to a supposedly more virtuous past.

BOOK V: CANTO I

Arthegall (who appeared at the tournament in the previous book and who is Britomart's love) is a champion of justice and a knight in service of the Faerie Queene. He has been tasked with saving a lady named Eirena from a tyrant named Grantorto who is unjustly holding her captive.

Arthegall is an important character in the poem, but until this point, he has mostly been a secondary figure in Britomart's story. Book V provides an opportunity to explore his character in greater depth.

Arthegall has been trained in the ways of justice from a young age by Astraea. He also learned swordsmanship and has a blade made of perfect metal that matches his exceptional skill in battle. This sword is called Chrysaor. Eventually, the world became so full of sin that Astraea couldn't stand it anymore and had to go back to the heavens. She left behind a man made of iron called Talus who will execute Arthegall's commands.

Arthegall's connection to a mythical sword suggests that his version of justice is based more on strength than mercy. His quasi-robot sidekick Talus suggests an equally harsh idea of justice, one that isn't swayed by emotions or sentiment.

Arthegall and Talus go to find Eirena. Along the way, they run into a crying squire next to a headless lady. The squire tells what happened: A so-called knight (Sir Sanglier) came by with his own lady but decided he liked the squire's lady better. He snatched the squire's lady up, then when his former lady tried to chase after him, he cut her head off. Arthegall asks which direction the knight was riding in.

As with most books in the poem, Arthegall's quest to find Eirena provides a basic framework for the story, but along the way Arthegall's adventure will feature many self-contained episodes that relate to the central story thematically but not always in terms of the plot of the main quest.

The squire says the knight is long gone but points in the direction of a plain. Arthegall immediately sends Talus out in that direction. Talus soon catches up with the knight, whose name is Sir Sanglier, and tells him to stop. Sanglier is angered and charges at Talus, but his attack isn't very effective. Talus grabs Sanglier in his iron hand, while Arthegall catches up.

Arthegall's encounter with Sir Sanglier provides an early demonstration of how efficiently Arthegall deals with injustice. The iron man Talus often provides the means for Arthegall to enact his version of justice on his enemies.

When Arthegall arrives, Sir Sanglier says he wasn't the one who killed the headless lady. Arthegall can easily see, however, that it wasn't the squire who killed the lady. Arthegall proposes that since neither of them will admit to killing the dead lady, they can split the living lady in half to share her. Anyone who disagrees with his plan will accept responsibility for killing the headless lady and spend 12 months doing penance.

Arthegall's judgment in this section deliberately references (and perhaps parodies) the judgment of King Solomon, who once suggested cutting a baby in half. Most interpret Solomon's judgment as not a literal command to cut a baby in half but just a trick to discover the identity of the true mother, and so here Arthegall suggests cutting the lady in half in hopes of creating a similar outcome.

Sir Sanglier agrees to Arthegall's proposal, but the squire disagrees and says he'd rather his lady not be cut in twain, even if that means she has to stay with Sanglier and he has to accept responsibility for killing the dead woman. Arthegall then reveals his true intentions, saying that the squire has proved himself worthy of the living lady. He then condemns Sanglier to bear the dead lady's head with him as a reminder of his shame.

The outcome of Sir Sanglier's disagreement follows the story of Solomon's judgment exactly. The real lover of the lady would rather see her alive, even if he doesn't get to keep her, which is why he says Sir Sanglier should get her. Arthegall uses this knowledge to confirm that Sir Sanglier is the imposter who doesn't actually care about the lady.

Sir Sanglier resists his punishment, but Talus forces him to take the head. The squire praises Arthegall's sense of justice and offers to serve him, but Arthegall turns him down, saying that Talus is all he needs.

Arthegall's successful judgment in this first small case establishes him as a judge-like character who will continue to play this role on a larger scale as Book V continues.

BOOK V: CANTO II

Arthegall happens to meet a dwarf on the road who tells him that Florimell is going to marry Marinell. It turns out he's Florimell's dwarf, Dony. Dony wants to get to the wedding himself, but he faces an obstacle. He tells Arthegall about a cruel Saracen on a nearby bridge who has defeated many wandering knights who tried to pass. The Saracen, named Pollente, charges a toll and fights those who don't pay it. His bridge is long and narrow, with many traps.

Pollente is yet another example in the poem of a Muslim character being portrayed as a cartoonish villain. Pollente's focus on taking a toll establishes him as greedy, and his narrow bridge full of traps suggests the many ways that paganism can ensnare faithful Christians.

At the end of the day, Pollente takes his ill-gotten wealth to his daughter Munera, who is richer than many princes. Arthegall goes to the bridge and finds another Saracen there asking him for a toll. Arthegall kills the man, which Pollente witnesses, and soon the two rush at each other with spears. Because of a trap, they both end up falling into the water of the river below.

Although Arthegall allowed the murderer Sir Sanglier to live, the Saracens here represent an even lower moral category because they aren't Christian. For villains that Arthegall believes have no hope of reform, he has no problem handing out swift and deadly justice.

Pollente is skilled at fighting in water and seems to have an advantage. Arthegall gets off his horse and fights Pollente while swimming. Eventually, he sees an opportunity and smites Pollente's head off. The head falls on dry land, but the body is carried downstream, so Arthegall impales the head on a pole as a sign for other men who pass that way.

The fact that Pollente's body just gets washed away downstream to disappear indicates how insubstantial he was. This is the second time in the poem that Arthegall uses a severed head as a warning sign, perhaps suggesting the power that symbolism plays in carrying out justice.

Arthegall goes to the castle where Pollente's daughter Munera lives. With Talus's help, Arthegall breaks into the fortified castle. Munera tries to stop him with stones and magic spells, but it doesn't work, so she hides. After breaking in, however, Talus is able to find Munera lying on a heap of gold.

Arthegall takes an active role in making sure that justice is carried out. This means directly seeking out evil-doers like Munera, even before they attack him.

Munera has hands of gold and feet of silver. Though she pleads for mercy, Arthegall chops off her hands and feet, then nails them up so that everyone can see, then he throws her body over the castle wall where she drowns in the mud. Arthegall then burns her possessions and has Talus destroy the castle from the foundations so that it can't be repaired.

While Arthegall's use of violence here is perhaps shocking here for a character supposedly so linked to justice, the extremity of his violence is supposed to indicate the extremity of Munera's sins and how bad it was that she stole so much wealth from good knights.

Arthegall and Talus set out again, and they soon come across a giant. The giant has a scale and is talking to a crowd about how he wants to use his scale to balance the whole world. The giant says everyone in the world is unequal, but he can make things equal again. Arthegall says the giant is wrong and God made everything perfect, but the giant says things would be better if mountains were razed to make everything flat and level.

The giant with a scale is a clear representative of the political idea of populism (a broad ideology that typically favors "common people" over monarchs, aristocrats, or other elites). Since the poem is dedicated to the monarch Queen Elizabeth, populism clearly is not a political stance that would be portrayed favorably in it.

Arthegall argues that the world is already balanced and that things that die and return to the earth eventually blossom, and things that blossom eventually die and become dust again. The giant still disagrees and the two of them argue about the various ways to measure wrong against right.

Arthegall argues that the giant is heretical for trying to change the world as God made it. Many monarchs throughout history, including Queen Elizabeth, claimed they had a divine right from God to rule, and so opposing this right was sacrilegious.

It turns out the giant isn't interested in justice; he's only interested in extreme positions and misleading people. When Talus realizes this, he knocks the giant off his rock, and he falls into the sea and drowns.

Because populism can't be portrayed positively in a poem that glorifies the British monarchy, it turns out the giant is a selfish trickster who deserves death.

The giant's followers see this and raise their weapons against Arthegall and Talus. Arthegall is dismayed, because he doesn't want to get his noble hands dirty with the blood of such common people. He sends Talus to broker a truce, but the crowd refuses, and so Talus kills them like flies. When there are no more people in the crowd left to fight, Talus and Arthegall leave to continue on their journey.

Talus's violence here against the mob is perhaps even more shocking than the violence carried out against Munera. While it is possible to read this section as a criticism of the extreme justice of men like Arthegall, it is also possible to read it as a defense of violent justice, suggesting that certain situations require harsh measures of justice.

BOOK V: CANTO III

The day of Florimell and Marinell's wedding arrives. It's a glorious feast where everyone eats until they're full. There is a three-day tournament where seven knights compete for Florimell's hand. Marinell is the winner on the first two days, but he gets taken prisoner on the third day.

Even though Marinell and Florimell have chosen each other, Marinell still has to prove his worth in a tournament, showing just how essential knightly displays and reputation are in the poem.

Arthegall arrives in the courtyard, and with him is Braggadochio, who met up with Arthegall along the way. Arthegall sees the hundred knights imprisoning Marinell, and so as a disguise, he swaps **shields** with Braggadochio. He then defeats all the knights and frees Marinell, before swapping shields back to Braggadochio. Meanwhile, Braggadochio has been hiding false Florimell.

The fact that Braggadochio can fool people into thinking he's Arthegall just by stealing his shield shows how deeply a knight's shield is connected to his identity. It makes sense that shields would be such essential objects for a knight, since good knights are protectors and shields are the perfect symbol of this.

Real Florimell comes to greet all the knights. Braggadochio then comes forward with his **shield** (which Arthegall used) and everyone cheers Braggadochio's name. When Florimell comes to congratulate him, however, Braggadochio brags that he has his own, even better lady. His squire Trompart brings out false Florimell, covered with a veil, which shocks and confuses the crowd. Even Marinell wonders if the false Florimell might be the true one.

Even after false Florimell was exposed in a prior beauty contest, knights like Braggadochio continue to value her over the real thing. Even Marinell is tempted for a moment, showing how powerful and seductive false things can be.

Arthegall can no longer stand to watch Braggadochio lie, so he steps forward to tell everyone that he was the one using Braggadochio's **shield** in the tournament. He shows his wounds as proof, then bets that Braggadochio's Florimell is not the real one.

Arthegall once again steps into the role of judge, revealing to the crowd that Braggadochio is a liar. In carrying out justice, he often uses symbolic displays, and he begins to do one here to prove how false Florimell is a fake.

Arthegall calls real Florimell forward. But as soon as real Florimell stands next to the false one, the false one vanishes into nothing, leaving behind an empty **gold belt**. Braggadochio is shocked and dismayed. Then Arthegall takes the golden belt and puts it around the waist of the real Florimell, where it fits well.

The gold belt, with its power to help its owner commit to chaste love, also acts as a judge of character, almost like the glass slipper in the story of Cinderella (a story that wasn't recorded until after The Faerie Queene *but which has ancient roots).*

Just then, Sir Guyon reveals that he's in the crowd, and he confronts Braggadochio about stealing his horse (which happened back in Book II). Arthegall is moved by the story but asks Guyon to prove his claims. Guyon describes a black spot shaped like a horse's shoe in the horse's mouth. The horse doesn't even open its mouth until Guyon calls its name—Brigadore. This is enough to convince Arthegall.

Arthegall's presence in the story signals an end to many of the injustices that have been going on, including the long separation of Sir Guyon from his horse. Guyon's knowledge of the horse's hidden blemish proves that he owned the horse, and also shows that he took care to learn all about it (something that Braggadochio apparently didn't do).

Arthegall wants to slay Braggadochio, but Sir Guyon says that Braggadochio's shame is punishment enough. Talus carries Braggadochio off, shaving his beard and taking away his **shield**. Braggadochio is disgraced, and the other knights and ladies soon resume celebrating.

Both Braggadochio's shield and his beard are symbols of his masculinity as well as his knightly status, and so Talus takes away these things to humiliate him, since status was important for knights.

BOOK V: CANTO IV

Arthegall leaves Florimell and Marinell's wedding festivities. As he travels, he meets two handsome squires who are twin brothers. In front of them is a treasure chest that is tightly closed. The two brothers are fighting with each other, which Arthegall watches at first before asking what the cause of their disagreement is.

The beginning of this canto resets the action and introduces a new scenario where Arthegall will be able to enact his version of justice by acting as the arbiter in a dispute.

The elder brother (Bracidas) begins to explain the problem. Their father, Melesio, divided his lands up equally between each brother, with each getting an island of the same size. But as time passed, the seas took land from the elder brother's island and gave it to the younger brother's island.

Disputes over land and inheritance come up often in the poem, showing how wealth can drive people apart, even people who are related to each other by blood.

This land dispute causes Bracidas's fiancée, Philtera, to leave him and marry his younger brother (named Amidas), who has more land. This in turn causes Amidas's former fiancée, Lucy, to throw herself into the sea to kill herself. Lucy soon regrets this decision, but luckily, she finds the chest floating in the sea, which she grabs onto.

Despite some parallelism between the status of the two brothers, the story clearly sets Bracidas and Lucy up to be the more sympathetic characters, since Philtera in particular is fickle and only motivated by wealth.

Bracidas happens to find Lucy after she washes ashore on his island with the chest. They marry and eventually find out that the chest is full of treasure. Philtera claims that she was on a boat that wrecked and that before it wrecked, she was on her way to deliver that treasure to her new husband, Amidas, but Lucy doubts this is true.

Bracidas and Lucy are seemingly rewarded for enduring their misfortunes by the chest that Lucy discovered, and Philtera's claim that the chest is hers is hypocritical, since her new lover Amidas benefited from having land carried to him on the sea, just like the chest.

Amidas confirms that parts of Bracidas's story about the land are true. But he says he can prove the treasure belongs to Philtera, just like she said. Arthegall says he'll mediate the argument to help them reach a decision.

Although Bracidas comes across as the more sympathetic character in the story, Amidas remains equally convinced that his position is correct, which is why they both feel comfortable putting the decision about justice to Arthegall.

Arthegall starts by asking Amidas what right he has to keep the land that the sea stole from Bracidas. He then turns to Bracidas and says the treasure is clearly the dowery of Philtera, so by what right is he keeping it from Amidas? Arthegall concludes, however, by saying that the sea works randomly, and whoever benefits from this randomness has a right to it. He says Amidas can keep the land, and Bracidas can keep the treasure. Amidas and Philtera are upset by this judgment, while Bracidas and Lucy are pleased. Arthegall, however, believes justice has been carried out, and so he leaves to continue his adventure.

Arthegall's version of justice is logical and consistent. He treats the sea as an impartial force that doesn't intentionally favor one brother or the other, and so the sea's random fluctuations should be respected. This reflects the role that chance can play in human lives and in justice: Arthegall believes that good or bad fortune does not necessarily have a role in determining justice.

Arthegall comes across a knight who has his hands tied behind his back, a noose around his neck, and a covering over his face. Around him, tyrannical women are taunting him. Arthegall doesn't like fighting women, so he sends Talus to disperse them. The women go home. Talus then frees the knight, whose name is Sir Turpine.

Many knights in the poem are tricked or otherwise trapped by women, but this is perhaps the most literal case of a knight being harassed by women. Arthegall's refusal to fight the women himself makes him a sort of God-like figure who executes his will through Talus, so that he can render impartial judgment at a distance.

Arthegall asks Sir Turpine how he ended up in this situation. Sir Turpine explains that he heard about the queen of the Amazon warrior women (named Radigund) who was in love with a knight named Bellodant but got rejected. As revenge, Radigund now takes out her anger on all knights. Arthegall is disturbed by this and goes to the Amazon capital of Radegone (named after Radigund).

Radigund provides an interesting contrast to Britomart, who is also a warrior woman but who is portrayed much more positively. Radigund's main flaw is that she didn't respect the rules of chaste love, and as a result of being rejected, she decided to scorn knightly values and torment brave knights.

When Radigund sees the unhurt Sir Turpine in front of her at the capital, she's full of rage. She throws him to the ground and steps on his head. This causes Arthegall to interfere, and he attacks Radigund with a stroke that would have killed her if she hadn't been prepared.

Radigund's rage also separates her from the composed Britomart. Though Radigund is strong, she is too passionate and doesn't know how to properly direct her strength.

Radigund and Arthegall fight until evening, with her Amazon warrior women joining the battle, but their arrows are unable to pierce Talus's iron body. That night both sides withdraw, with Talus keeping watch for Arthegall and Sir Turpine. Meanwhile, an angry Radigund calls her maid Clarinda over and asks her to send a message to Arthegall. She wants to face him in one-on-one battle.

Despite rebelling against the role a woman should play in chaste love, Radigund nevertheless respects certain knightly rituals, such as the tradition of settling disputes in one-on-one combat. Like many villains in the poem, she follows certain rules because she seems to believe that she is in the right.

BOOK V: CANTO V

The next morning, Arthegall and Radigund each prepare for their upcoming fight. They walk out, trumpets sound, and a furious battle begins. Arthegall strikes her with his weapon as if he's a blacksmith pounding an anvil, but she manages to wound his thigh. But just as she brags about causing this injury, Arthegall shatters her **shield**, then hits her on the head, knocking her helmet off.

Arthegall starts the fight strong, proving why he's earned such a fearsome reputation as a knight (he was, after all, first introduced as the Savage Knight in Book IIII). The shattering of Radigund's shield seems to indicate that victory for him may soon be in sight.

When Arthegall sees Radigund's face, he is temporarily enchanted by her beauty. But when she attacks, Arthegall soon snaps out of his daydream. He is defeated by Radigund and agrees to be her vassal. Her first act as victor is to hang Sir Turpine. She then leads Arthegall over to a chamber with many other defeated knights and sets him at the lowest position. They are all forced to dress like women and do household tasks.

The reveal of Radigund's beauty offers a moment of reversal that strongly recalls the moment when Arthegall was paralyzed by the sight of Britomart without her helmet on. But unlike Britomart, who used her power over Arthegall judiciously, Radigund takes advantage of how her beauty stuns Arthegall and ultimately uses her beauty as a tool to defeat him.

Arthegall spends a long time as the servant of Radigund. All the while, however, Radigund is secretly bothered by love for Arthegall. She calls her maiden Clarinda to ask her how she can free Arthegall from his servitude but still keep him loyal to her.

Radigund's revenge on knights involves more than just killing them. Just as Arthegall sometimes gives symbolic punishments to suit his idea of justice (such as impaling Pollente's head on a stake as a warning to others), here Radigund punishes Arthegall in symbolic ways that fit her own idea of justice.

Clarinda goes to explain Radigund's feelings to Arthegall. Arthegall explains that even if he wanted to, he doesn't have the means to show favor to Radigund while he's in captivity. As she's talking, Clarinda makes the mistake of falling in love with Arthegall herself.

Clarinda's disloyalty to her master Radigund reflects the corrupt lifestyle of these Amazon women, in contrast to more trustworthy relationships like the virtuous one between Arthur and his squire Timias.

Clarinda reports back to Radigund that Arthegall is obstinate and would rather die than love her. Radigund rages, then composes herself. She decides the best option is to increase Arthegall's hardships, such as by slowly decreasing his rations of food.

Clarinda may claim to be in love with Arthegall, but her love only makes life crueler for him, showing how her particular version of love is corrupt at its core.

Clarinda lies to Arthegall when she visits him, saying that she is asking Radigund to treat him better but she won't listen. While Arthegall believes Clarinda's lies and thinks she is advocating for him, he still remains faithful to Britomart, to Clarinda's disappointment.

Arthegall has fallen far and been humbled, but even at his lowest point, he remains faithful to Britomart, showing the depth of his heroic character.

BOOK V: CANTO VI

Talus, who could not be subdued by the Amazons, leaves to tell Britomart about the situation Arthegall is in. Britomart had been waiting for him for a while, sometimes blaming her own impatience, other times suspecting him of being untrue. When Talus finds Britomart, he doesn't want to tell the bad news, but at last he tells her how Arthegall is being held prisoner by Radigund.

Just as Una rescued the Redcross Knight from Despair in Book I, Britomart will now have to rescue Arthegall from the clutches of Radigund. As a woman who uses her strength in keeping with the knightly code of conduct, Britomart makes the logical choice to go up against the rebel Radigund.

Britomart angrily assumes at first that Arthegall is wooing Radigund, but Talus assures her he's in no state to do so. Convinced at last, Britomart rides off after Talus to go find her imprisoned love.

What the metal man Talus says and does is absolute, and so Britomart has no reason to doubt him when he says Arthegall has been faithful.

Soon after starting their journey, Britomart and Talus run into an old knight who offers them a place to stay for the night. Though Britomart has a single-minded focus on her goal, she sees night is at hand, and so follows the knight back to his home. She keeps her armor on, fearing possible treachery, and Talus keeps watch all night.

Britomart has already been betrayed once before by accepting hospitality (by Malecasta, the Lady of Delight), and so her decision to leave her armor on suggests that she is keeping her guard up.

Sure enough, Britomart is betrayed by the old knight, and two other rude knights come in the middle of the night looking for a fight. Talus, however, fends them off. It turns out the old knight is Dolon, a wicked knight who likes to bring noble knights into his house and then shame them. Dolon has three sons, and as it turns out, his oldest son was slain by Arthegall—Dolon believes that Britomart is Arthegall (since she hasn't taken off her armor).

Dolon seems to be a less threatening and less successful version of Radigund—they both hope to bring noble knights down into a state of shame. Rather than improving themselves, evil characters in the story often prefer to drag others down to their own level.

Britomart wakes up ready to get her own vengeance on Dolon for tricking her, but he's nowhere to be found. She and Talus leave, coming to the bridge where Arthegall fought and killed Pollente. Two pagan knights challenge her, but she kills them both.

Britomart and Talus easily make it through Dolon and the pagan knights, who are only minor opponents compared to the mightier Radigund.

BOOK V: CANTO VII

Britomart heads for the temple of the Egyptian goddess Isis (who is powerful and just, as well as being the wife of the god Osiris). Talus isn't allowed into the temple. Britomart goes deeper into the temple and finds an idol of Isis with a crocodile at its feet. There, near the crocodile, Britomart falls asleep.

This strange detour might seem out of place and somewhat "pagan" for such a Christian poem, but the section is full of both Christian and British symbolism, even as it incorporates elements of polytheistic ancient Egyptian religions.

In her dream, Britomart sees a priest of Isis offering a sacrifice. Then a storm whips up, and the whole temple almost catches on fire. But then the crocodile wakes up and eats both the storm and the fire. It then threatens to eat Britomart. Isis, however, calms the crocodile, and it becomes humble toward Britomart. It woos her and impregnates her, and she gives birth to a great lion. Then Britomart wakes up.

There is some ambiguity to this dream sequence, but it seems safe to conclude that, as a priest explains in the next section, Arthegall is the crocodile, and the lion that Britomart gives birth to is a glorious future for Britain. The imagery of the lion and the strength it represents could suggest that Queen Elizabeth is a strong leader, although lions also have other important symbolic roles in British history and are associated in particular with Richard I, a Christian king who waged war against Muslims in the Crusades.

Awake, Britomart heads over to some priests of Isis and tells them about her strange dream. One priest explains that the crocodile actually represents Britomart's love, Arthegall, and that the lion represents their eventual child, who will rule over all the land. This eases Britomart's troubled mind a little bit, so she leaves and continues on to the land of the Amazons.

In keeping with the poem's focus on allegory and on clearly instructing readers on how to live virtuous lives, the priest here explains the dream from the previous section in order to remove some of the ambiguity from what might otherwise be a bizarre passage.

When Radigund hears of Britomart's arrival, she is confused, but she is courageous and always eager to fight a new knight. Britomart waits outside the gate until a trumpet sounds, indicating that a fight will begin soon. The two run at each other and begin striking hard at each other with their swords.

Radigund's eagerness to start fights once again suggests that she is too passionate to truly act according to the code of chivalry as Britomart does.

Radigund, seeing a chance to get an advantage, inflicts a serious wound on Britomart's shoulder. Britomart, however, responds by hitting Radigund so hard on the helmet that it makes her kneel. She then proceeds to chop off Radigund's head.

By forcing Radigund to kneel, Britomart humbles her as revenge for her humbling of Arthegall. Beheading was a form of execution for criminals in Spenser's Britain, and so characters who have committed crimes often get beheaded as their punishment.

Radigund's death angers the Amazons, but Talus starts killing any of the warriors that attack him. Britomart goes into the prison and finds Arthegall there. She asks why he's wearing women's clothes and has him change back into typical knight's armor.

By dressing Arthegall in women's clothes, Radigund tries to reverse the normal balance of power between knights and ladies. While Britomart doesn't act like most ladies, she nevertheless respects the typical roles that knights and ladies play.

Britomart needs time to heal, so she stays in the Amazon city. While there, she repeals women's liberty restoring them to "men's subjection," which is "true Justice." She frees the other imprisoned knights and makes them magistrates, who pledge an oath to Arthegall. Arthegall returns to his original quest, which saddens Britomart, but she understands and so holds back her complaints.

This section is one of the most explicit in the poem in showing how chivalry involved women acting in a subservient manner toward men. Britomart's dedication to this social order seems to be part of why she's allowed to otherwise be an exception to this rule, just like the real Queen Elizabeth.

BOOK V: CANTO VIII

Though beauty is one of the most tempting things on earth, nothing can stop Sir Arthegall from completing his duties to the Faerie Queene Gloriana. Back on his quest, he comes across a damsel (Samient) riding quickly past. She is being chased by two knights, who are being chased themselves by a third knight (Arthur).

This passage stresses Arthegall's commitment to serving the Faerie Queene, even though he has been distracted from his main quest for the entirety of this book and is about to be distracted again. Rather than painting Arthegall as hypocritical, however, Book V illustrates how wide-ranging a knight's responsibilities were and how big a role helping strangers played in a knight's duties.

Samient sees Arthegall and asks for help. He responds by killing one of the knights chasing her, then Arthur kills the other knight that was chasing the damsel. Arthegall and Arthur ready their weapons against each other, but Samient tells them to calm themselves. Arthegall and Arthur apologize to each other and quickly begin to admire each other.

Arthur often greets heroic knights suspiciously when he first sees them, but he remains a good judge of character and soon recognizes Arthegall for the just knight that he is. As with many of the protagonists in the poem, Arthegall soon befriends Arthur and comes to rely on him for assistance.

Arthegall asks who the two knights they just killed were. Arthur doesn't know; he just saw them chasing Samient. The damsel explains that she serves a renowned virgin queen named Mercilla. But despite the queen's virtue, a wicked man wants to steal the throne, motivated by his wife Adicia.

The virgin queen Mercilla is yet another Queen Elizabeth-inspired character in the story. Though her virginity seems to be a source of power for her, it also draws unwanted attention from jealous rivals.

Despite the problems Adicia causes, Mercilla wants to deal with her in a friendly, peaceful way. She sent Samient as a messenger, but Adicia didn't respect the normal rights of a messenger and kicked the damsel out like a dog, rejecting the peace offering. She then sent the two knights out to chase after Samient (where they were killed by Arthegall and Arthur).

Mercilla is associated with mercy, perhaps to a fault, allowing other characters to take advantage of her. She both complements and contrasts with Arthegall, who represents a version of justice that is arguably merciless at times, particularly when he sends Talus out to do his work.

Arthegall proposes dressing up in the armor of one of the slain knights and pretending that Samient is their prisoner. They go to the court of the evil man, called the Sultan, who wants to overthrow Mercilla because of his wife Adicia. Arthur soon arrives and demands that Samient be let go. The Sultan refuses and prepares to fight.

The villainous Sultan continues the trend in the poem of villains who are clearly meant to represent Muslims (or at least British stereotypes of what Muslims were). More broadly, he represents all usurpers who would try to challenge the legitimate rule of a queen like Mercilla or the real-life Elizabeth.

The Sultan battles Arthur while mounted in his chariot. He manages to strike a serious wound on Arthur's side. Just then, however, Arthur grabs his **shield** from a shady place, and the light causes the Sultan's horses to sprint off in the opposite direction, taking the chariot with them. The Sultan is helpless to stop them. Arthur chases after the Sultan, finding that his body has been broken from the fast, treacherous carriage journey and that only his shield and armor remain.

Arthur uses the light from his shield to defeat the Sultan—both light and shields are heroic symbols that represent knowledge and protection respectively. The Sultan being killed by his own horses is a form of justice that reflects how he got carried away with his own ambition in trying to claim the throne for himself.

Arthur brings back the Sultan's armor and hangs it up, enraging Adicia. She plans to kill Samient with a knife, but Arthegall intervenes. This only increases Adicia's anger. She wanders off, eventually turning into a tiger and unleashing her wrath on any man or beast that crosses her path. Arthegall rids the castle of any knights still loyal to Adicia, then welcomes Arthur as the day's victor.

Adicia's transformation into a wandering tiger suggests both the strength of her wrath and also how unfocused it is, lashing out at whatever crosses her path. Like the Sultan, her punishment fits her personality and specifically her flaws that led her to challenge Mercilla.

BOOK V: CANTO IX

Arthegall and Arthur spend some time enjoying the dead Sultan's house before deciding it's time to start traveling again. But Samient persuades them to go see Mercilla, who isn't far away. Along the way, they hear about a wicked knight named Malengin who steals from travelers and lives far underground, so they decide to try to find him.

Malengin's lair underground suggests darkness, recalling how the Sultan was just defeated by the light from Arthur's shield, as well as how monsters like Error in Book I dwelled in the darkness.

Samient leads Arthegall and Arthur to Malengin's cave. When they arrive, Samient goes first and tries to call him out of the cave. Suddenly, he emerges, and they're all horrified by his dreadful appearance, such as his empty eyes and long curly hair. He has a staff and a big net—like a fisherman fishes at a stream, Malengin fishes for fools by the side of the road. Malengin ensnares Samient in his net, and Arthegall rushes after her, but the terrain is treacherous, so he sends Talus ahead.

Malengin is perhaps a dark parody of part of the New Testament where Jesus asks his followers to become fishers of men (meaning that they should spread his teachings and make converts). Malengin acts as a disciple for evil, luring fools into his lair, then robbing them.

When Talus catches Malengin, he uses his flail to break his bones and disembowel him. Talus, Arthur, and Arthegall leave him to be eaten by vultures, then free Samient as they continue their journey toward Mercilla.

Malengin is easily defeated by Talus, showing how weak he was when confronted directly. The knights don't bury him as a sign that he was a wicked man who didn't deserve respect.

Arthegall, Arthur, and Samient finally make it to the court of the queen Mercilla. Many splendid knights are there to greet them. In the court, there's also a bad poet with his tongue nailed to a post, as punishment for blasphemy against the queen. The knights greet Queen Mercilla, who also praises Arthur and Arthegall.

The seemingly benevolent court of Queen Mercilla has one surprisingly dark image, with the poet whose tongue has been nailed to a post. While it is possible to read a subversive element into this part of the poem (that Spenser might be secretly criticizing Queen Elizabeth), the more straightforward interpretation is that Mercilla (and by proxy Elizabeth) is such a great queen that it's a serious sin to blaspheme her.

A woman who looks beautiful but is accused of serious crimes (Duessa) is brought before the court. A man called Zeal stands up and tells of Duessa's many crimes, including treason against Mercilla. After listing Duessa's many crimes, Zeal then brings out the hag Ate. He keeps bringing out more women who have committed crimes, including Murder, Sedition, Incontinence, Adultery, and Impiety. Zeal urges the queen to punish Duessa. The queen sees the need for justice but also has pity for Duessa.

It's interesting that Duessa shows up in the court of Mercilla, since earlier in Book I, Duessa was one of the few villains to receive mercy rather than being beheaded. Rather than repent, however, Duessa went right back to her villainous ways. Mercilla's pity for Duessa suggests the depth of her generosity and contrasts with the more strident calls for justice from others in the court.

BOOK V: CANTO X

The narrator praises mercy, a virtue that Mercilla has in abundance. Duessa is seen as guilty by all in the court and Mercilla regretfully allows her to be executed. Arthur and Arthegall remain in Mercilla's court for a while.

This scene recalls Queen Elizabeth ordering the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. The implication is that if even a queen as merciful as Mercilla feels the need to execute Duessa, then surely Elizabeth was justified in executing Mary.

One day, two young men come to the court to ask for help for their mother, Belgae. Belgae had 17 children, but 12 of them were killed by an evil tyrant named Geryoneo with six arms and six legs. Geryoneo promised to protect Belgae from foreign invaders, but really, he just wanted an excuse to get at her children, whom he sacrifices one by one to a monster he has. Two of the surviving children ask Mercilla for help. Mercilla sends Arthur out to help, while Arthegall goes off on his own separate quest.

Geryoneo represents tyrannical rule. He promises to protect Belgae from foreign invaders while really just eating her children, recalling how real tyrannical leaders often carelessly start wars or commit other atrocities that lead to lots of parents losing children.

Arthur arrives in the land where Belgae lives and sees it has been devastated by its tyrannical ruler. Geryoneo has defiled chapels by building his own false idols near them. The tyrant monster lives in a garrison guarded by many knights. After Arthur dispatches a few of the knights, the remaining guards scatter. Arthur enters the gate, along with Belgae and her two sons.

Geryoneo's defiling of chapels shows his own ego and lack of reverence. His creation of false idols could be a criticism of Catholics, who use objects like rosaries in prayer in a way that many Protestants find heretical, or at least unnecessary.

BOOK V: CANTO XI

Geryoneo is enraged at Arthur for defeating all his guards, so he puts on his armor in preparation for battle. Though Arthur attacks forcefully, Geryoneo has an advantage because of his three sets of arms. Arthur strategizes carefully and sees an opening to lop off one of Geryoneo's arms. His next strike decapitates Geryoneo's horse. Geryoneo is furious and strikes back, but Arthur responds by chopping off two more of his arms.

Geryoneo's many limbs perhaps reflect the many different ways he tries to control his subjects as a tyrant. Arthur lands many powerful blows on Geryoneo that barely seem to faze him, showing what a durable force tyranny can be.

At last, Arthur manages to land a strike that goes through all three of Geryoneo's bodies at once, killing him. Belgae and her sons bow in gratitude toward Arthur. They all go to the chapel nearby where Geryoneo left his false idol, and Arthur slashes it three times. When he does this, a great beast rises up. The creature has the face of a woman but the body of a dog, the claws of a lion, the tail of a dragon, and the wings of an eagle. When she sees Arthur's shining **shield**, she attacks.

Despite Geryoneo's incredible durability, ultimately, he is no match for Arthur, who as a future king of England is the epitome of just rule and so the perfect hero to defeat the tyrant Geryoneo. The beast that Arthur faces is yet another evil creature that instinctively lashes out when it sees light.

The monster tries to pry away Arthur's **shield**, shouting curses as it goes. The two struggle, until eventually Arthur strikes the monster in the stomach and rips its guts out, killing it. As the monster dies, it breathes out clouds of poison. Belgae is so overjoyed that she holds a feast. Arthur stays around long enough to make sure all is well, then he takes his leave and heads back.

The beast's inability to steal Arthur's shield represents the strength of his own faith and what a firm grasp he has on it. Ultimately, it is by trying to attack Arthur's shield that the beast leaves itself open to being killed. The poison it breathes out as it dies represents how evil it was to the core.

Meanwhile, Arthegall has just left Mercilla and is on his own adventure. He is still trying to save Eirena from Grantorto (which he has been doing since Canto I of Book V). He runs into an old but true knight named Sir Sergis. He tells Arthegall about how he heard where Grantorto was taking Eirena as a prisoner. Furthermore, he says that Grantorto issued a challenge: if a champion doesn't appear by a certain day, Eirena will be put to death. Arthegall asks how to get to the location where Grantorto has made his challenge, and Sir Sergis tells him. He warns him, however, that he only has 10 days left.

As Arthegall finally begins to focus on his original quest of saving Eirena from the tyrant Grantorto, Book V heads toward its climax. Though it might seem that the events of the previous few cantos are unrelated to Arthegall's main quest, the stories about Mercilla and Geryoneo were both stories about legitimate vs. illegitimate rule, and the story of Eirena and Grantorto will continue that theme.

Arthegall continues on until he comes to a knight who is being bothered by an insistent lady in a crowd. It turns out the knight's name has been blotted by shame and his **shield** is gone. Nevertheless, Arthegall sends Talus to disperse the crowd and free the knight from the lady. The knight thanks Arthegall and says his name is Burbon.

The fact that Burbon parted with his shield—one of the most important symbols of his knighthood—suggests that he has fallen on hard times and needs redemption if he ever wants to become a reputable knight again.

Burbon explains he used to have a lady named Flourdelis until she was enticed away by golden gifts from Grantorto. He then sent a crowd to fetch her (the same crowd that attacked Arthegall when he tried to free Burbon).

Although Burbon has made mistakes, this section suggests that he has also fallen on bad luck and been victimized by the tyrant Grantorto.

Arthegall asks about Burbon's broken **shield**. Burbon responds that he was originally dubbed a knight by the Redcross Knight himself and received his own shield embossed with a cross. Many envied Burbon's shield, and so to avoid enemies, Burbon put his shield aside. Though Arthegall doesn't approve of this, he agrees to help Burbon when Burbon asks for his aid in fighting the peasants Grantorto has sent to take Flourdelis.

Burbon is not like the worst knights in the story, but his decision to put aside his shield nevertheless represents a moment of cowardice. In his role as judge, Arthegall still sees potential in Burbon, however, so he tells him that he will fight on his side.

The peasants crowd around Arthegall and Burbon like flies, but they're no match for Talus's iron flail. Arthegall and Burbon themselves defeat the captains of the mob, then continue on to where Flourdelis lives. Arthegall shames her for trying to hide her natural beauty with the golden gifts of Grantorto. She is ashamed and allows herself to be carried off by Burbon. Arthegall and Talus continue toward Grantorto.

The description of the peasants as a swarm of flies once again reflects the poem's bias against populism (which is the opposite of enlightened rule by monarchs). Just as Burbon is a good knight who temporarily loses his way, his lady Flourdelis is a good woman who got tempted, and so like Burbon, she has an opportunity to redeem herself.

BOOK V: CANTO XII

The time for Arthegall's meeting with Grantorto draws near. As he's traveling near the coast, he happens to find a boat in good working order. Arthegall, Talus, and Sir Sergis set sail, but as they go to land on the island where Eirena is being held, swarms of men on the shore try to prevent them from docking. Talus gets out of the boat and drives them away. The human knights get out of the boat, but again, they're soon attacked by an army from Grantorto, who is expecting them. Talus kills so many of the attackers that Arthegall tells him to stop.

The swarms of men that Arthegall and Talus beat back once again reflect populism and its evil effects of turning peasants against just rulers. Even Arthegall, however, has some sympathy for these peasants, who are being misled by their leader, and that's why this is a rare moment where he asks Talus to show some restraint with the killing.

Arthegall, Sir Sergis, and Talus draw near Grantorto and send out a message to say that Arthegall will challenge him in battle the next day. Eirena wakes up believing she will die that day, but she is relieved to see her champion Arthegall has arrived and is wearing full armor.

Once again, the knights adhere to a code of conduct, and Arthegall believes the best way to end Grantorto's tyranny is to defeat him in the context of a formal duel that will pit their knightly skills against each other once and for all.

Grantorto makes his own appearance on the field, looking fearsome and deadly in his armor. Trumpets sound, and the battle begins. Grantorto strikes very quickly and powerfully, but Arthegall is prepared. Nevertheless, Grantorto's iron ax wounds Arthegall, and Grantorto seems to go for a killing blow. Arthegall manages to block this mortal strike with his **shield**, and Grantorto's ax gets stuck in Arthegall's shield.

Grantorto is a strong opponent whose tyrannical rule represents a potent threat to justice. He nearly overcomes Arthegall, who is saved at the last moment by his shield—the same object that has saved many a heroic knight over the course of the story.

Grantorto tries to get his ax out of Arthegall's **shield** but can't. Using his blade Chrysaor, Arthegall hits Grantorto on the helmet, staggering him and knocking him to his knees, then he lops his head off. The people in the crowd shout for joy at being freed from Grantorto's tyranny. Eirena is freed and restored to her rightful place on the throne. Arthegall stays for a while and tries to help establish justice in the kingdom.

Like Radigund, Grantorto is brought to his knees before behind beheaded. This is a humbling gesture that forces him to kneel to rightful authority, and it also recalls the execution of criminals. Eirena's return to her rightful throne indicates that at last justice has triumphed over unjust rule.

Eventually, Arthegall leaves because he must return to **Faerie Court**. As he's traveling back, he runs into two evil, ugly hags: Envy and Detraction. The two join forces against Arthegall, since they are angry at him for freeing Eirena (who was in their thrall while she was with Grantorto). They flank Arthegall on both sides and hurl some of the foulest insults at him that he's ever heard. They even unleash a monster called the Blatant Beast, which has a hundred tongues. Arthegall, however, doesn't send Talus to chastise the hags. He keeps heading back toward Faerie Court and doesn't let anything distract him.

As with previous books in the poem such as Book I, Book V has an easy challenge after the climax that the hero overcomes with no problem. The weak challenges of Envy and Detraction show how futile it is to try to topple Eirena's rightful rule, although the Blatant Beast will return as a more formidable foe in the next book.

BOOK VI: PROEM

The narrator says that variety is what keeps him from getting bored as he continues through the long journey of the story he's telling. He once again asks his Muse for guidance as he continues on this journey. He notes that out of all the virtues, which grow like flowers, perhaps none of them bloom as beautifully as courtesy. True courtesy, which is different from false imitations of courtesy, is valuable and embedded deep in the mind, but the narrator hopes to show how his queen embodies this virtue.

Courtesy is an important virtue not just in Book VI of the poem but in many prior books as well. While politeness is an important part of courtesy, the virtue is bigger than simple politeness. It signifies good behavior and adherence to chivalry on a wider level, and that makes it one of the most important qualities a knight can have.

BOOK VI: CANTO I

At **Faerie Court**, where there are many knights and ladies with good manners, there is no knight more courteous than Calidore, who is loved by all. Calidore heads out from court on an adventure and runs into Arthegall, returning from his victory over Grantorto (at the end of the previous book). Arthegall asks what Calidore is doing, and Calidore replies that he is on a quest to find a creature from the underworld called the Blatant Beast. Arthegall has in fact seen this many-tongued beast (also at the end of the previous book), and so he wishes Calidore well on his quest to slay it.

Even in the sixth out of six completed books, the poem is still introducing new protagonists like Calidore, reinforcing the narrator's point from the proem that variety is an important quality. The Blatant Beast is related to the monster from earlier that spread slander and lies about good knights and ladies, and so it makes a logical antagonist to a courteous protagonist like Calidore.

Calidore continues down the road and comes across a squire who seems upset and is tied to a tree. Calidore asks what happened, and the squire tells of the castle of Briana up ahead, where knights and ladies can't pass because the guards there lock away the ladies and charge the knights a toll. Briana loves a knight named Crudor who is proud and refused her love, unless she could give him a mantle made from the beards of knights and the hair of ladies.

Charging a toll to pass was the same crime that Pollente the pagan committed in Book V. Refusing to let knights pass on a certain road is the opposite of hospitality and courtesy. Briana ends up hurting innocent knights, all for the sake of her personal dispute with Crudor.

To win Crudor's love, Briana enlists the help of a guard named Maleffort. While Calidore and the squire are talking, they hear a noise and realize that it is Maleffort carrying off the squire's lady. Calidore runs after Maleffort, and the two fight. Calidore gains the upper hand, so Maleffort runs away.

Maleffort's name suggests that he is someone who is up to no good (since "mal" means "bad"). Maleffort has no grudge of his own, but his willingness to carry out orders for Briana's unjust grudge makes him just as guilty.

Calidore chases after Maleffort, catching up with him and chopping his head off. He then kills the castle porter as he breaks in. Briana sees Calidore and calls him a traitor knight for murdering her men. Calidore is a little ashamed but maintains he's done nothing wrong. Briana sends her dwarf off to fetch Crudor, saying he must save her from an evil knight.

Calidore may be the knight who represents courtesy, but that doesn't mean he won't chop someone's head off. Maleffort may just be following orders, but the orders he follows are so offensive to typical knightly courtesy that Calidore sees no choice but to kill him.

Calidore and Crudor fight the next morning. Crudor immediately charges at Calidore without even verifying his identity and the two knock each other off their horses. Calidore gets up quickly, disappointing Briana, who thinks Crudor might be dead. She wails in disappointment, looking like she's about to throw herself over the castle wall. Crudor, however, eventually recovers and gets up.

Crudor (whose name is like "crude") very rudely attacks Calidore before even verifying who he is. As the knight of courtesy, Calidore is Crudor's opposite while also being his equal, given that they both knock each other off their horses at the same time.

The fight begins anew, with both Calidore and Crudor attacking forcefully. Eventually, the two of them decide to put all their power into a strike at the same time. Calidore gets the upper hand, knocking Crudor on the helmet and making him kneel. Crudor pleads for Calidore to spare his life. Calidore stays his hand, but he scolds Crudor for his pride. Calidore makes Crudor pledge to be loyal to Briana, and he agrees.

Although Crudor fought against Calidore, Calidore chooses to spare him, an opportunity he didn't give Maleffort. This inconsistency might seem strange: one possible explanation is that Crudor is of higher birth and so more capable of redemption, at least in Calidore's view. Another possibility is that Calidore shows mercy for Briana's sake.

Briana is delighted to finally have Crudor. His love and courtesy help to restore Briana, who shows her thankfulness by holding a big feast. She wants to give Calidore a gift, but he refuses to accept land or money in exchange for his good deeds. He leaves the castle to continue on his quest.

The happy ending for Briana and Crudor is a little surprising, given how rudely they behaved earlier, but Briana's generosity in throwing a feast and offering gifts suggests that she truly has been reformed by finally having Crudor's love.

BOOK VI: CANTO II

According to the narrator, courtesy is the most fitting virtue for knights in love with ladies. As Calidore continues his journey, he comes across a young man of about 17 (Tristram) fighting on foot against an armed knight while a lady watches from nearby. To Calidore's surprise, the young man defeats the knight and kills him.

Fighting without armor, Tristram is at a great disadvantage and much more likely to be injured. Any knight who would attack an unarmored boy would not have been a very honorable knight.

Calidore asks the young man why he's bloodied his hands by killing a knight. The young man replies that normally he wouldn't kill a knight, but the knight started attacking him, even though the young man wasn't wearing armor.

Killing a knight is a serious offense, but it would be justified in self-defense, particularly for a boy without armor.

The young man gives more details, telling how he saw the knight coming through the woods with his lady, and the knight made his lady walk on foot while he rode, using his spear to push her forward when needed. The young man criticized the knight for this, and that's how the fight began. Calidore praises the young man's actions.

The dead knight acted very discourteously toward his lady, not only refusing to let her ride on the horse, but even prodding her along as if she were herself a wild animal. Calidore clearly doesn't approve of this, and so he takes the unarmored young man's side.

Calidore and the young man go to speak to the lady. She tells how she was traveling with her knight, when all of a sudden, he saw another lady (Priscilla) and got jealous of her knight (Aladine). The evil knight tried to take the new lady but she got away, and so the knight continued on with his current lady, taking out his frustration on her.

Knights like Blandamour and Paridell have shown the dangers of fickleness in knights. The evil knight that the young man describes here should have been satisfied with the lady he already had, but his lust and greed made him try to steal someone else's lady, then take out his frustration on his own.

Calidore says the young man is clearly noble and asks about his background. The young man reveals his name is Tristram, and he's the son of a king from Britain called Meliogras who died and left behind a widowed wife, Queen Emiline. The queen fears for Tristram's life, so she sends him to Faerie Land where he'll hopefully be free of assassination attempts. Rather than resting in Faerie Land, Tristram has been training himself by learning about the forest.

Noble blood in the poem often leads to both virtue and exceptional fighting skills, and Tristram has both these qualities. His virtuous nature means that he isn't content to just hide and rest while avoiding assassination attempts, so instead he works on improving himself.

Tristram would like to travel with Calidore and learn about knighthood from him, but Calidore says he promised to complete his quest alone. He suggests that instead Tristram help the lady who is now all alone. And so, Tristram takes the armor off the knight he just killed and rides off with the lady.

Calidore is an unusually solitary knight compared to some of the other protagonists in the book. His refusal of Tristram shows his dedication to his own duty.

Calidore rides on until he reaches a place where a knight was severely wounded by the knight that Tristram killed. Next to the injured knight, his lady weeps. The lady tells her story, and it turns out she is the lady that the dead knight was trying to capture. She managed to run away and hide, but it looks like her knight was mortally wounded defending her.

Calidore sees firsthand that Tristram's story was true. The lady and injured knight have clearly been victims of injustice, and so Calidore knows that the courteous thing to do is to try to help them however he can.

Calidore informs the woman that the knight who wronged her is already dead, which brings her some relief. She doesn't want to bother Calidore to help with her own grievously wounded knight, but he volunteers to give the injured knight a balm and help carry him to a nearby castle.

Calidore does the courteous, hospitable thing by offering to help a random knight and lady that he met on the road. Helping people in immediate need often takes precedence for a knight over focusing on long-term quests.

BOOK VI: CANTO III

After helping the wounded knight back to the castle, Calidore meets Aldus, an old man who used to be strong in his younger days and who is the father of the wounded knight (whose name is revealed as Aladine). Though Aldus has reason to grieve because his son is injured, he tries to be cheerful for his guest.

Aldus demonstrates that he is a good person and that his son Aldus is worthy of being helped by offering his own hospitality to Calidore as a thank-you for what the knight has already done.

The lady, whose name is Priscilla, keeps grieving. She fell in love with Aladine, who was of lower birth than her but who had proved himself valiantly as a knight. Priscilla won't go to bed, wanting to watch over wounded Aladine all night.

Aladine is a rare example in the poem of someone of lower birth who proved himself to be worth more than his birth status. This suggests that, to some extent, a knight's reputation can even take precedence over their social class.

Aladine wakes up and is dismayed to see how much his injury is upsetting Priscilla. When Calidore visits them later, Aladine seems to be doing better. In order to help ease everyone's grief, Calidore goes back to the corpse of the evil knight, chops off the head, and brings it back with him. Everyone is happy to see it. After spending a little while longer there, Calidore rides off to continue his journey.

Typically in the poem when emotions impact physical states, the emotion in question is love. In this case, however, a sickness caused by grief is cured by the sight of a severed head. The dead knight's head reassures Aladine that chivalry will prevail and that unjust knights will get their punishment, perhaps helping him get the motivation to recover.

As Calidore is riding, he sees a knight called Sir Calepine in the shade with his lady, Serena. They are both ashamed when they see Calidore coming toward them. While they're talking, Serena wanders off to pick flowers and is suddenly taken by the Blatant Beast. The knights chase after the beast, which decides it doesn't want to fight Calidore, and so it drops Serena to get away.

Sir Calepine and Serena are ashamed because they know Sir Calidore has seen them and they believe he thinks they were doing something improper. While it's possible that they were *doing something improper, the presence of the Blatant Beast (which slanders good knights and ladies with false accusations) suggests that Calepine and Serena really might have been doing something innocent.*

Sir Calepine is dismayed to see that Serena has bloody wounds from the beast. He puts Serena on his horse so that they can take her to get help. They travel until they come to a river that isn't crossable on foot. A knight (Sir Turpine, but not the Sir Turpine killed by Radigund) and lady (Blandina) also come to the river. Calepine asks for their help in carrying Serena across, but the knight refuses. The knight's lady doesn't approve of her knight's behavior, finding it discourteous.

The wounds that Serena receives from the beast are a metaphor for the wound her reputation would take if (false?) news spread that she was doing something improper with Sir Calepine. It's also a very physical wound that's endangering her health, however, which is why the rude knight's refusal to help is particularly impolite and heartless.

Sir Calepine decides to try carrying Serena out into the river, using his spear as a walking stick. The discourteous knight on the riverbank laughs at Calepine's attempts, so Calepine gets angry and challenges the knight to a duel. Eventually, Calepine makes his way across the river and gets Serena to a castle.

The river represents all the adversity Sir Calepine will overcome to try to protect Serena. The rude knight who laughs at him seems to also be laughing at the very concept of chivalry and knightly hospitality.

The porter at the castle door is also rude and refuses to let Sir Calepine and Serena inside. The porter replies that the lord of the castle, Sir Turpine, only lets into the castle knights that he has fought with. Turpine is stern and macho, challenging every knight he meets. When the porter tells Turpine about Calepine and Serena's plight, Turpine still refuses to let them in, even after Blandina pleads with them. With nowhere else to go, Calepine takes Serena to a bush to sleep.

Sir Calepine and Serena's bad luck continues. The courteous Sir Calidore offers to help people by the side of the road, but the stingy Sir Turpine won't help people even when they show up knocking on his doorstep—the two knights have totally opposite personalities.

The next day, Serena looks feeble, and Sir Calepine is concerned. Calepine is angry and wants revenge, but for Serena's sake, he rides on in search of help. As he rides, he sees a knight who looks like he might want to take advantage of Calepine's situation. Calepine realizes it's the rude knight who wouldn't help him by the river or let them stay in his castle: Sir Turpine.

Sir Calepine shows good judgment as a knight, putting the health of his lady over his own desire for revenge. Sir Turpine, on the other hand, shows a total lack of empathy, simply doing as he pleases for his own amusement.

While Calepine is angry with Sir Turpine, he doesn't want to fight because he needs to help Serena. But the rude knight isn't satisfied, chasing after Calepine and leaving a severe wound on his shoulder, then continuing to follow him even after that.

Sir Turpine's attack on an unwilling opponent shows his extreme cowardice. Even when openly provoked, Sir Calepine prioritizes Serena's health.

BOOK VI: CANTO IV

Calepine and Serena's fortune has been like the fortune of a sailor caught at sea and tossed on the waves. Just as they're in trouble, however, a "savage" man who, up until that point in his life, had never shown pity before, sees Sir Turpine's cruel assault and tries to intervene. Though the man doesn't have armor or weapons, he is invulnerable due to magic.

The "savage man" introduced in this section is very different from the cannibal carle who nearly ate Amoretta in Book IIII. While his character is also clearly the product of British stereotypes about foreigners, he is a much more sympathetic character than the carle.

The savage man fights up close with Sir Turpine, gaining the advantage and causing him to flee. Though the savage man is fast on foot, he can't keep up with Turpine's horse.

Sir Turpine is so rude that even a "savage man" from the forest has a better understanding of courtesy than he does.

The savage man comes back to Sir Calepine and Serena. He can't talk but uses gestures to indicate that he wants to help. He then brings them to safety and helps staunch their wounds. He's mostly successful at healing their outward wounds, but Serena still has an inward wound that herbs and salves can't heal.

The "savage man" has a connection to the forest that allows him to find healing herbs that others can't, although even this isn't enough to make Serena better.

When Sir Calepine gets back his strength, he goes out wandering in the woods without his weapon or armor, and he sees a bear carrying a crying infant in its mouth. Calepine chases after the bear, and even without a weapon, he's able to snatch the baby away. This, however, angers the bear, which charges at him.

While Sir Calepine remains devoted to helping Serena, he nevertheless is still ready to help other innocents in need, like the baby being kidnapped by a bear.

Sir Calepine stays strong as the bear tries to attack him. He shoves a stone down its throat, then chokes the bear while it's weakened. The bear stops struggling, so Calepine takes the baby and heads off. He soon realizes, however, that he's gotten lost, and so he begins to wander with the baby. Around nightfall, he makes it out of the forest.

Sir Calepine's ability to choke a bear with his bare hands is a sign of how, in moments of desperation, he gets the strength he needs to survive. Unfortunately, however, his good deed is what causes him to lose his bearings in the forest.

Outside the forest, Sir Calepine runs into a sad-looking woman named Matilda. Her husband, Bruin, recently conquered the surrounding lands by defeating a giant named Cormoraunt. He ruled the land well, but despite this good luck, he doesn't have an heir, and Cormoraunt still threatens to take back the land.

Matilda and Bruin are very minor characters in the poem, but they provide a convenient means of tying up the story of Sir Calepine and the baby he rescued from a bear, making Sir Calepine's actions here feel significant and even predestined.

Sir Calepine replies that he actually has the perfect solution to their problem, since he just found a baby in the middle of the woods. Matilda agrees that what Calepine says is reasonable, and so she adopts the child as her own, eventually raising him to grow up and be a famous knight. While Calepine is satisfied with this resolution for the baby, he still worries about Serena, and so he sleeps on the hard ground, promising not to use a bed until he finds Serena again.

Famous knights often have unusual birth stories (Arthegall, for example, is a mortal who was stolen by fairies), and here Sir Calepine lays the groundwork for yet another famous knight (although this knight won't appear again in The Faerie Queene*). With this matter resolved, Calepine can once more focus on finding help for Serena.*

BOOK VI: CANTO V

Though the "savage" man may not seem noble on the surface, he is pure of heart and so must have some noble blood. He feels sorry for Serena's poor condition, so he goes searching for Sir Calepine. He comes back to her one time and mimes choking (to show Calepine's fight with the bear), but Serena assumes this means Calepine is dead, and so she begins to weep.

The "noble savage" became a stock character in fiction many years after the publication of The Faerie Queene. *While this character came before the trope was fully formed and recognized, he represents a similar case of romanticizing aspects of a "primitive" outsider.*

Having lost hope that Sir Calepine will return, Serena wanders off. The savage man doesn't want her to go alone, so he dresses up in Calepine's armor (which he left behind) to accompany her. The two are a strange pair, but the savage man treats her like a gentleman.

Armor is such an important part of knighthood that it even gives the "savage man" an opportunity to look and act like a knight on the road.

One day, however, the savage man is adjusting some equipment on Sir Calepine's horse, and Prince Arthur and his squire Timias witness this. Three villains named Despetto, Decetto, and Defetto have been plotting ways to overthrow Timias (who is back in the good graces of Belphoebe). These villains sent the Blatant Beast his way. Timias couldn't resist fighting the evil monster, and in the fight, he got bitten before the beast ran away. Timias pursued the beast.

Timias originally angered Belphoebe because it looked like he was being unfaithful to Belphoebe with her twin sister Amoretta. This damaged his reputation as a squire, and so Despetto, Decetto, and Defetto send the Blatant Beast after Timias to try to ruin his reputation again. The wound he receives from the beast perhaps symbolizes that earlier damage to his reputation.

While chasing the Blatant Beast, Timias was lured into a place where he was surrounded on each side by Defetto, Decetto, and Despetto. Just then a knight rode in to the rescue: it was Arthur, who recognized his former squire. They reunited, and the squire shed some tears, and this was how they eventually ended up together to see Serena and the savage man.

Arthur and Timias spend much of the story separated, but the bond between them is so strong that their paths can't help crossing again. Arthur often shows up when noble characters need him most.

Arthur and Timias believe the savage man has stolen his armor, and so they start to fight with him in hopes of freeing Serena. She cries out to them to stop, however, telling them how the savage man has been helping her and how she recently lost Calepine in the woods. They all decide to ride together. Timias begins to feel weak from his wound by the Blatant Beast.

Arthur and Timias accept the "savage man" as an ally, perhaps because of his noble blood and knightly way of carrying himself. With both Timias and Serena suffering from wounds from the Blatant Beast, the beast has proved how dangerous it is.

Arthur is moved to hear from Serena about the uncourteous behavior of Sir Turpine. They make their way to a hermitage to rest, though both Serena and Timias remain troubled by their wounds. Arthur decides to leave them in the hermit's care and go off on his own.

Arthur's sense of chivalry makes him despise a rude character like Sir Turpine. He may still be on his quest to find the Faerie Queene, but he will always stop to help good strangers or to fight bad ones.

BOOK VI: CANTO VI

The wounds the Blatant Beast left in Serena and Timias only continue to fester and grow. The hermit, who was once a proud knight, continues to care for them but notices how serious their wounds are. The hermit knows of the Blatant Beast, and he knows how herbs alone can't cure the beast's poisonous bite. He tells them to live a simple ascetic life like him, and soon after they do so, they begin to heal. They are eventually well enough to leave.

The hermit's cure of living an ascetic life may seem at first to be an unusual one. On the one hand, asceticism can be associated with religion, and so living simply like a monk might improve one's spiritual health, and ultimately one's physical health. Since the Blatant Beast's wounds are related to a person's reputation, perhaps it is also helpful to withdraw from society to live an isolated life, where reputation isn't as important.

Serena and Timias stick together, since she is fearful and wants protection, and he is courteous. They come to a maiden (Mirabella) in mourning clothes, riding a mangy animal and with a churl and a fool leading them.

This section builds suspense by introducing some strange characters that Serena and Timias encounter before switching over to a different part of the story.

Meanwhile, Arthur and the "savage" man go out seeking Sir Turpine as Serena described him. They go to Turpine's castle, where Arthur pretends to be a mild errant knight who is wounded and needs sanctuary. Arthur is turned away, which enrages the savage man, who starts tearing people up with his teeth like a lion. More people attack Arthur and the savage man, and when they're beaten back, they go bring the news to Turpine.

Arthur pretends to be a lowly injured knight in order to see Sir Turpine's lack of courtesy firsthand. Despite the "savage man" having noble blood, he still fights in an animalistic way (although noble knights themselves are often compared to wild animals, like boars or lions).

Sir Turpine accuses Arthur of cowardly slaying his men, then sends 40 new men over to attack him, but Arthur holds his own. Turpine sees Arthur's skill and tries to flee, but Arthur spots him and fights his way through the crowd. They run around the castle until at last Turpine is cornered. Arthur smites him on the head, though it's with the flat of the blade so it doesn't pierce his skull.

Sir Turpine continues to prove his own cowardice, first telling outright lies, then attempting to flee before he himself is in any danger. Perhaps Arthur deliberately avoids striking a killing blow against Sir Turpine because he wants to teach him a lesson.

Blandina runs over and covers Sir Turpine with her clothes, pleading for Arthur to show mercy. Arthur holds off on dealing a killing blow. When Blandina backs away to reveal Turpine, he is cowering, and Arthur regrets sparing his life. He scolds Turpine for the wrongs he's committed against noble knights and ladies. Arthur commands Turpine to give up his knighthood and live a normal life.

By letting Blandina plead for mercy on his behalf, Sir Turpine even allows his lady to go into danger before him, which is why Arthur scorns him and regrets showing mercy. Nevertheless, the presence of Blandina seems to be what convinces Arthur to give Sir Turpine another chance if he promises to reform his ways.

Arthur goes back to check on the savage man and finds him still ruthlessly attacking Sir Turpine's men. He orders the savage man to back down. The savage man and Arthur stay at the castle for a little while, and Blandina pretends to be a good hostess, but really, she is just trying to create an opportunity for Turpine to get revenge. But Turpine procrastinates in a cowardly manner, and so Arthur and the savage man leave before anything can happen to them.

Like the iron man Talus, the "savage man" can be a powerful force for justice, but he also sometimes needs instructions from a more level head like Arthur's. At their castle, Blandina and Sir Turpine demonstrate that they've learned nothing, and Turpine is perhaps even more cowardly than before.

BOOK VI: CANTO VII

Cowardly Sir Turpine has no intention of improving himself, though he puts on a friendly outer face. Two knights he doesn't recognize come to visit him. They ask about an evil man that they heard about nearby, and Turpine points them in the direction where Arthur can still be seen riding off. The one knight calls to Arthur, then attacks him.

Because Sir Turpine is too cowardly to face Arthur again, he relies on others to do his work for him. He may lack the advanced magic of a trickster like Archimago, but he is still perfectly capable of misleading people with his words.

Arthur fends the knight off and strikes back with a swing that wounds the knight seriously and bathes him in his own blood. He dies. The other knight arrives and is intimidated to see his partner dead and bloodied on the ground. The knight fights for a little while, but Arthur is clearly so strong that eventually the knight begs for mercy. Arthur grants it to him, but says that as a condition, he must bring whoever sent him on his quest to kill Arthur.

Predictably, two random knights are no match for Arthur, not even with their power combined. Arthur kills the one for recklessly attacking him. The other knight shows good sense by recognizing Arthur's power and not even trying to oppose it any longer.

The knight goes back to Sir Turpine and lies to him, telling him that both his partner and Arthur are dead. He and Turpine then go back to where Arthur and the dead knight are. In fact, Arthur is sleeping after the battle and does look on the outside like he could be dead. Turpine is satisfied and wants to go back, but the knight prevents him, telling him the truth about Arthur's deal to spare his life if he brought Turpine there.

The knight here doesn't seem to have any strong allegiances other than to himself. After Arthur confronts him, he has no problem changing sides and betraying Sir Turpine in order to lead him back to where Arthur is waiting for him.

Sir Turpine begins to quake at the thought of being punished by Arthur, so he makes plans to attack him while he's still asleep. While he's debating what to do, however, the "savage" man is watching from the woods.

Sir Turpine may act like a coward in order to protect himself, but in this case, his hesitancy leaves him open to attack by the "savage man."

The savage man shakes his wooden weapon. Just then Arthur wakes up and immediately sees Sir Turpine coming for him. Arthur gets his sword ready, but Turpine immediately drops down and begs for mercy again. Arthur takes all of Turpine's gear, then hangs him upside-down from a tree by his ankles as a warning to others.

Sir Turpine doesn't even attempt to fight Arthur a second time, begging for mercy as soon as he realizes he won't be able to land a sneak attack on a sleeping Arthur. Instead of killing Sir Turpine, Arthur humiliates him by stripping him of all the symbols of his knighthood, perhaps feeling that this is even worse than giving him a knightly death in battle.

Turning back to Serena and Timias, they behold the lady on an ass, led by a fool and a churl. The dignified lady, whose name is Mirabella, is famous throughout Faerie Land, even though she is of low birth. Though she seems worthy of love, her pride and stubbornness have stopped her from finding it.

Not many ladies of low birth in the story achieve the sort of fame that Mirabella does, but in spite of (or perhaps because of) her lowly origins, she is too proud about her appearance.

One day, Cupid held a meeting in his court and found that several lovers were missing. Infamy and Despight testified that these men were missing on account of Mirabella, who has allegedly killed them by withholding her love. Cupid punished Mirabella by sentencing her to wander in penance until she saves as many people as she has "killed." When she meets Serena and Timias, she has been repenting for a year and only saved two out of 22 required people.

While the previous section established that Mirabella was too proud, arguably the punishment that Cupid proposes for her is too harsh, since she could never have loved so many men and it is therefore unfair to blame her for their deaths. Despite being a god, Cupid has already been established in the story as a mischievous figure who doesn't always act morally.

The rude man with Mirabella is a giant from the same house as Orgoglio (who was slain by Arthur in Book 1) named Disdain. He wields an iron club. The fool who leads her horse is called Scorn, and he is a cruel man who wields a whip.

Mirabella has been accused of being disdainful and scornful of the men who loved her, and so, fittingly, her punishment is to be prisoner to a giant named Disdain and a fool named Scorn.

Timias is dismayed to see how Disdain and Scorn treat Mirabella, so he attacks Disdain. When Timias's foot slips, Disdain whacks him with his iron club, then ties him up. They take Timias with them, while Serena thinks he's been slain and so runs away.

Timias can see that Mirabella's punishment is overly harsh, so he tries to intervene, but Disdain is a powerful giant (and Timias just recovered from his injury from the Blatant Beast), and so Timias is captured, too.

BOOK VI: CANTO VIII

Mirabella sees Timias taken captive by Disdain and Scorn, and she feels pity. They keep traveling and run into Arthur, along with a knight named Enias. Timias is embarrassed to be seen in such a wretched state. Enias thinks it's shameful how Disdain is treating Mirabella and Timias, so he warns him to either let his captives go or face death. He fights Disdain and draws blood, but gets knocked down just like Timias and Scorn goes to tie him up.

Mirabella's pity for Timias shows that she has good inside her and is not as scornful and disdainful as she's been accused of being. Enias is a minor character—his name perhaps resembles Aeneas, a character who, like Arthur, has significance in the mythological history of Britain.

Arthur sees Enias getting captured and flies toward Disdain. He tries to strike a powerful blow, but Scorn sneaks under and strikes Arthur's knee. While Arthur recovers, Mirabella calls out to Arthur, saying that even though Disdain deserves to die, Arthur shouldn't kill him because her life depends on him. She explains to Arthur the penance that Cupid has inflicted on her.

Despite Mirabella's past as someone who was perhaps too proud, she has graciously accepted the punishment that Cupid inflicted upon her. She wants to put aside her disdainful ways, and so she allows her horrible jailer Disdain to live.

Mirabella has a bottle that she fills with tears that she keeps in a bag, and when the bottle is full, she'll be forgiven. But the bottle leaks, and the bag has holes. As she's saying this, Arthur looks at Disdain's captive and is surprised to recognize his squire Timias. Meanwhile, the "savage" man has been watching and takes that moment to ambush Scorn, but Arthur and Mirabella convince him to stop attacking. Arthur wants to help Mirabella, but she chooses to continue living out her punishment. And so, the two part ways.

Mirabella realizes that she may be trapped in an eternal punishment, but she tries to accept her situation with grace. While her situation inspires pity, perhaps it is also supposed to inspire admiration that Mirabella has become so humble that she is even willing to accept a punishment she may not fully deserve. Particularly in a poem where ideal women are often depicted as subservient, she seems to represent a model of good behavior.

Meanwhile, Serena is fleeing for her life from Disdain and Scorn, after seeing how they captured Timias. She blames her knight Sir Calepine for leaving her in such a piteous state. Eventually she gets tired and falls asleep, not realizing that she's right near a tribe of cannibals. They can't believe their good luck when they see her.

Fair women like Serena are always in danger when they're alone—particularly in the wilderness—and her lack of awareness about the cannibals shows just how much she needs Sir Calepine's protection.

Serena wakes up, but she can't escape in time, and the cannibals grab her. They consider raping her until one of their priests advises against it, saying she must be a pure sacrifice. They take her to an altar where the priest is holding a knife. They blow their bagpipes for the ceremony, and just by chance, Sir Calepine happens to be nearby, searching for Serena. He heads toward the source of the noise.

Again, cannibalism could be symbolic for Catholicism (given that Protestants accused Catholics of being cannibals for their belief that they eat Christ's body during the Eucharist). The altar and particularly the bagpipes similarly suggest the heavily Catholic Ireland (where Spenser himself fought for the British against the Irish). This passage presents Catholicism as little more than a pagan ritual.

Sir Calepine makes his way to the ceremony and sees a captured woman, not knowing yet that it's Serena. He begins slaying swarms of the cannibals around him with his sword. He makes it to Serena and unties her. She is ashamed of being seen without any clothes on, and Calepine doesn't realize her identity until the next day.

Sir Calepine is such a good knight that he rescues a helpless woman without even realizing until the next day that it's his beloved Serena. The moral is that helping people can often have unexpected benefits, because you never know who the person you're helping will turn out to be.

BOOK VI: CANTO IX

Calidore returns to pursuing the Blatant Beast, not resting day or night as he chases after it. One day, while traveling across a plain, he runs into some shepherds playing the pipes and asks them if they've seen the beast. The shepherds haven't but offer Calidore a drink, which Calidore accepts.

Like the protagonists of the prior books, Calidore's journey is far from a straight line, although many of the stories that occur along the way (even ones without the protagonist) relate to the chapter's main theme (in this case, courtesy).

Calidore and the shepherds go back to the shepherds' home, where there is a fair damsel wearing a garland of flowers. Her name is Pastorella, and she is loved by all the shepherds, particularly by one named Coridon, although she doesn't love him back. Calidore himself is so enchanted with Pastorella that he temporarily forgets about chasing the Blatant Beast.

Coridon (also spelled Corydon) was a frequently recurring character in a genre of ancient Greek and Latin poems called pastorals, which celebrated nature and rural life. As Pastorella's name also hints, this canto and the next couple play with the genre of the pastoral (a genre that Spenser himself wrote in outside The Faerie Queene*).*

Melibee, the father of Pastorella, sees that Calidore is alone and invites him into his house. Calidore accepts and courteously thanks Melibee for the hospitality. They talk about the pastoral life of a shepherd, which they both agree is wonderful. But when Calidore says he'd like to become a shepherd, Melibee warns him that fortune knows best and perhaps fortune has already placed Calidore on another path. Calidore persists, however, and Melibee lets him stay.

Melibee is named after a character in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer is another writer who took inspiration from pastoral poetry. The courtesy and hospitality of a country man like Melibee are intriguing to a knight like Sir Calidore, who also values these virtues due to their importance in chivalry.*

Calidore begins his new life as a shepherd, looking longingly at Pastorella in the fields. Pastorella, however, isn't used to refined knightly ways and instead prefers the simple songs of the shepherd Colin Clout. Calidore notices this and decides to start dressing in simple shepherd's clothes.

Calidore's longing for Pastorella is a metaphor for his longing to give up the knighthood and live a simpler life out in the fields. Colin Clout is a character who first appeared in a different poem that Spenser wrote and published around the same time he was working on The Faerie Queene*.*

When Coridon sees Calidore trying to win Pastorella's affection, he's annoyed. He starts giving her lots of little presents, like squirrels and sparrows, but she continues to ignore him. One day the shepherds are playing with Colin Clout leading the music and Calidore, who is now most favored by Pastorella, leading the dancing. Calidore is courteous, however, and gives Coridon a chance to lead the dance, satisfying him for the moment.

Sir Calidore's time as a knight has given him qualities that make him attractive to Pastorella even more so than a man like Coridon, who has lived a pastoral life since he was born. This section looks at how knightly and pastoral ideals both overlap and differ from each other.

Another time, Coridon challenges Calidore to a wrestling match, but he badly underestimates how strong Calidore is. Again, however, Calidore is courteous, and he gives the winner's garland to Coridon. Calidore proves that he's suited to the pastoral life after all and eventually wins the love of Pastorella.

Although wrestling is a pastoral tradition, Sir Calidore's own experiences as a knight have made him even better prepared to compete at wrestling. Nevertheless, because Calidore is a courteous man, he tries not to wound Coridon's pride any more than he has to.

BOOK VI: CANTO X

Calidore is troubled because he wants to abandon his old quest of pursuing the Blatant Beast to continue his new quest of loving Pastorella. One day, he is walking and comes across a lovely hill called Mount Acidale that overlooks a tranquil vale. The place is so lovely that supposedly Venus herself relaxed there.

This pastoral interlude raises important questions about knightly duty. While Sir Calidore's quest to stop the Blatant Beast is important, the pastoral life also seems worthwhile and would perhaps be more pleasurable.

As Calidore goes up Mount Acidale, he hears a shepherd playing pipes and see 100 pale naked maidens dancing. They are the Graces, the handmaidens of Venus. The shepherd playing for them is the famous Colin Clout. In the middle of the circle is one unnamed lady, and she's the one Colin Clout is playing for. Calidore is amazed by what he sees, but as soon as the Graces spot him, they all disappear.

This strange scene brings to life the wonder and splendor of pastoral living. Colin Clout's pipe-playing is so beautiful that it literally summons servants of Venus down to dance for him. Nevertheless, there is a melancholy underneath all the celebration, as Colin Clout is unable to reach the one woman he's playing his song for.

Calidore tells Colin Clout he is lucky to be playing for such dainty damsels, but Colin replies that he isn't because once the damsels disappear, they can never be called back again. Colin explains that the damsels—the Graces—are daughters of Jupiter. But he doesn't know the identity of the woman in the center of the circle, who was the most chaste and beautiful of all the Graces. Colin calls this woman Gloriana.

The disappearing damsels illustrate how some of the most beautiful aspects of pastoral life are also the most ephemeral. Surprisingly, Colin Clout's pipe-playing seems to be able to put him in contact with the Faerie Queene herself, Gloriana, suggesting yet another connection between knightly life and the pastoral life.

Calidore apologizes to Colin Clout for interrupting him. His heart aches for Pastorella, so he returns to her and continues doing whatever he can to serve her. Coridon, however, continues to be a rival for Pastorella's affection and tries to outdo Calidore's good deeds.

Sir Calidore continues to face a difficult decision. While loyalty to a lady is one of a knight's highest purposes, by staying with Pastorella, Calidore won't make any progress on stopping the Blatant Beast.

One day, Calidore, Coridon, and Pastorella are gathering strawberries in the woods when a tiger runs at Pastorella. Coridon runs to the rescue first but cowardly gives up. Calidore then runs forward and hits the tiger so hard with his shepherd's staff that its head flies off. He places the decapitated tiger head at the feet of Pastorella, and from then on, she loves him much better than Coridon.

The tiger is an early warning sign that the beautiful idyllic life can be suddenly torn apart at a moment's notice. Calidore's quick beheading of the tiger with only a shepherd's staff gives evidence that he's lost none of his knightly prowess, even after all his time living pastorally.

Calidore joyfully woos Pastorella, but one day the shepherds' peaceful life is interrupted by the arrival of some brigands who ransack the place. They take everything Melibee has and kidnap Pastorella as well as Coridon. The brigands take Pastorella, Coridon, and Melibee to their cave on a little island, which is hidden by overgrown grass. The brigands intend to sell their captives as slaves.

Like the tiger, the brigands (a type of thief) come out of nowhere and interrupt the pastoral life with shocking violence. For all its charms, the pastoral life is fragile, and its residents are vulnerable to violent attackers, since they aren't strong knights like Calidore.

BOOK VI: CANTO XI

Pastorella remains trapped for a while in the dark den of the brigands. The captain of the brigands notices Pastorella among the prisoners and is captivated by her beauty. Nothing he says or does seems to win her favor, but at last Pastorella realizes that it might be a good idea to pretend to favor the captain. She pretends to like him, then pretends to be sick whenever he goes too far.

Without Sir Calidore to protect her, Pastorella is in a desperate situation, and she uses her wits the best she can in order to try to hold on until someone can come to rescue her. Because she's protecting her chastity, her trickery is morally justified in the poem and even admirable.

One day while Pastorella is faking an illness, some merchants come to the brigands' den hoping to buy all the shepherds as slaves. The captain doesn't like this, but he brings all the shepherds out, including Pastorella, Melibee, and Coridon. The merchants are particularly interested in Pastorella, which angers the captain further, and he tries to claim that she is his. But the merchants say they'll only make a deal if Pastorella is included.

Pastorella inspires greed on both sides of the deal. The new merchants lust after Pastorella, but the captain of the brigands is so full of lust himself that no amount of money will make the deal worthwhile if he loses her.

Things between the captain and the merchants get heated, until suddenly negotiations break down and they start to fight. Fearing the shepherds will rebel, the brigands kill some of them, including Melibee, although Coridon manages to sneak away. The captain fights for Pastorella with his life, and when he is mortally wounded, Pastorella falls down with him, looking dead. Though she has herself been seriously injured, when the victorious remaining brigands clear out the corpses, they find she's still alive.

The brigands are violent men, and here they suffer the consequences of living such violent lifestyles, where a jealous argument can end in bloodshed. Innocents like Melibee get cut down in the chaos, although the brigand shows surprising (and perhaps misplaced) loyalty by giving up his life for Pastorella, suggesting that she is so fair that she can inspire good deeds even in bad people.

Meanwhile, Calidore is just coming back from the woods to see the devastation that the brigands inflicted on the shepherds' home. He is furious and searches around until finally he finds Coridon (right after he managed to elude the brigands). Calidore asks Coridon about Pastorella, and he says he saw her fall down dead (which isn't true, but which is how it looked from his perspective). This greatly upsets Calidore. Coridon tells of Melibee's death as well and about the captain who tried to prevent Pastorella from dying.

Sir Calidore learns for himself how fragile the beautiful pastoral life can be. Seeing the death and destruction caused by the brigands, he begins to remember why he was a knight in the first place. This tragedy marks the beginning of Calidore's transition back to accepting the responsibilities of knighthood.

Full of anguish, Calidore makes plans with Coridon to go directly to the den of the brigands and seek revenge. They disguise themselves as shepherds and travel until they reach a hill where they see some of the sheep that the thieves stole. The sheep are being tended by unfamiliar shepherds, who are asleep. Calidore wakes the shepherds and finds that they are poor grooms who have run away from their masters and been hired by the brigands.

Although Sir Calidore and Coridon were once rivals, tragedy has brought them together and taught them how to cooperate. Coridon seemed at times both cowardly and incompetent compared to Calidore, but the danger to his home forces him to grow and become braver like Calidore.

Calidore and Coridon then sneak into the den of the brigands, and Calidore is overjoyed to see that Pastorella is actually alive, although there are no other survivors. He breaks in and kills a brigand guard who puts up little resistance, then he calls to Pastorella. She goes to him, and they kiss and embrace. More guards come, but Calidore slays them like a lion among deer. He and Pastorella escape, recovering some of what the brigands stole from the shepherds.

The lack of survivors illustrates the consequences of greed, not just for innocent victims like the shepherds but for attackers like brigands as well. Calidore helps finish off the brigands and restore what he can of the shepherds' possessions, but this adventure marks the end of his pastoral time.

BOOK VI: CANTO XII

Having rescued Pastorella, Sir Calidore decides to return to his original quest of pursuing the Blatant Beast. First, though, he stops with Pastorella at a castle called Belgrade, which belongs to Sir Bellamoure. Bellamoure is devoted to his lady Claribell, who disobeyed her rich father's wishes by choosing Bellamoure.

Pastorella is a pure and virtuous character, yet she also belongs to a different world than Sir Calidore (a knight who is known for traveling alone). The beginning of this canto finds an unusual way to wrap up these contradictions.

Sir Bellamoure and Claribell had a daughter together, but Claribell's father took the baby and abandoned her (although the child was later found by a handmaiden). The father threw Claribell and Bellamoure in the dungeon, but after he died, they regained their freedom and lived in harmony. Sir Calidore and Pastorella get along well with Bellamoure and Claribell, so Calidore leaves Pastorella with them when he goes to find the Blatant Beast.

Sir Bellamoure and Claribell are minor characters, but they also have surprising significance that gets explained in the next section. For now, they are simply a means for Sir Calidore to continue on his journey without Pastorella, while also making sure that she will be adequately cared for.

Pastorella misses Calidore after he leaves. While he's off on adventures, she remains at the castle, where she gets to know the handmaiden who rescued Claribell's abandoned daughter. One day, the handmaiden realizes that Pastorella has a birth mark just like the one that Claribell's daughter used to have. This means Pastorella is Claribell's daughter, and the two of them have finally been reunited without even realizing it at first.

This lost child story gives Pastorella's story a joyful ending while at the same time giving her a reason to leave Calidore so he can finally complete his quest. One important function of knights was protecting or restoring the status quo, and here Pastorella is restored to her rightful family.

Meanwhile, Calidore crosses the land in search of the Blatant Beast. The beast also roams, robbing churches and other holy sites, and also fleeing when it sees Calidore. Eventually, Calidore manages to corner the monster and starts attacking.

The Blatant Beast, which ruins the reputations of good knights and ladies, also shows no respect for religious institutions.

The Blatant Beast has a frightening mouth full of all kinds of tongues, some of dogs, cats, bears, or tigers, but mostly tongues of men. It also has poisonous serpent tongues. Sir Calidore isn't afraid, however, and he uses his **shield** to pin the monster down. The beast rages and tries to get free, becoming stronger as it struggles. But Calidore manages to restrain it with an iron muzzle.

The poison on the Blatant Beast's tongues shows how dangerous words can be. The beast combines human features with animal features, perhaps to suggest how human slander and lies are so harmful that they take on animal-like power. With so many tongues, the Blatant Beast's source of power is its mouth, and so Sir Calidore is able to humble the fearsome creature by putting a muzzle on it.

With its muzzle on, the Blatant Beast loses its power and follows Sir Calidore around like a cowardly dog. Calidore takes the beast across the land to display it, and people everywhere marvel at how obedient the fearsome creature has become.

The humbling of the Blatant Beast symbolizes how many people with big mouths become less powerful when you take the power of speech away from them. With his overpowering courtesy, Calidore has forced the rude beast to give up its lies and false statements.

Eventually, through bad fortune, the Blatant Beast breaks out of its chains and begins running around spreading slander about good knights. He gets so powerful that no one can ever chain him up again. The narrator says that even his own poem isn't free from venomous words, but he hopes that the reader will value his rhymes regardless.

Somewhat surprisingly, the evil Blatant Beast eventually manages to break out of the muzzle. Given the narrator's statements at the end, this might be a veiled way for Spenser to complain about people who say bad things about his own poetry, who attack him just as the Blatant Beast attacks people with its poison tongue. It might seem unusual for a poem about good triumphing over evil to end with an evil beast roaming free, but part of the issue could have been that Spenser planned to write six more books of the poem, only to die before finishing them. The survival of the Blatant Beast could have also been a way for Spenser to criticize his own critics.

TWO CANTOS OF MUTABILITIE: CANTO VI

The first Canto of Mutabilitie, numbered Canto VI, is about Mutabilitie (also called Change), who is a daughter of the Titans (the old Greek and Roman gods who came before the new gods of Olympus like Jupiter/Zeus). As a descendent of Titans, Mutabilitie causes havoc on earth with her powers and wants to reign over the other gods in heaven.

Edmund Spenser planned for The Faerie Queene *to be 12 books, but he died when only the first six were published. The "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie" were published after his death and seem to be from* The Faerie Queene, *though questions remain about what Spenser's original intentions were.*

Mutabilitie tries to win favor with various gods but fails. She angers Jupiter so much that he almost has her executed, but at the last minute, he notices how lovely she is. He asks her to give up her foolish claim that she has a right to rule in heaven.

Mutability means the ability to be changed. By arguing that she deserves to rule heaven, Mutabilitie is arguing that change is perhaps the most important and constant thing in the universe.

Mutabilitie appeals to take her case to Nature on Arlo-Hill. Arlo-Hill used to be an idyllic place where the woods goddess Diana (also sometimes called Cynthia) spent her time. There, the lusty forest god Faunus liked to watch her and her nymphs. One day, Faunus tried to watch them bathing, and Diana punished him by cursing Arlo-Hill, causing it to be overrun by thieves and wolves.

Nature, with changing its seasons and weather, would seem to be closely aligned with Mutabilitie, which is perhaps why Mutabilitie chooses to plead her case with the powerful Nature.

TWO CANTOS OF MUTABILITIE: CANTO VII

Mutabilitie makes her argument to Nature on Arlo-Hill while other gods are also there to witness. Nature is a gracious old dame who covers her face. Mutabilitie praises Nature, then gives a long speech about how things in nature are always changing, from the seasons to the weather, and so "mutability" is what rules over everything.

Because Mutability couldn't make her case to Jupiter, one of the most powerful forces in heaven, she turns instead to Nature, one of the most powerful forces on earth. Using logical arguments, she stresses similarities between herself and Nature.

Jupiter attempts to rebut her argument, saying that really it is time that rules the earth and that it's the gods who rule time. But Mutabilitie replies that even the gods change and aren't immune to time, since even Jupiter was born and didn't always exist.

For his counterargument, Jupiter suggests that time is his domain and that it's even more important than change, since changes can only happen while time is passing.

Nature considers the arguments of Mutabilitie and Jupiter in silence for a while. At last, Nature gives a verdict: she agrees with Jupiter that, while it might seem as if change rules everything, in fact it's the opposite, and change is ruled by the gods, meaning Jupiter gets to keep his throne as ruler of the gods in heaven.

Nature's decision to side with Jupiter over Mutabilitie suggests that, while it might seem like things on earth are always changing, in fact these changes only happen according to the will of the gods. Although the characters here come from pagan mythology, the implication is that randomness doesn't rule the universe, but in fact things happen according to the will of God.

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