



A TUTOR FOR THE WART

ADAPTED FROM *THE SWORD IN THE STONE* BY T.H. WHITE

CAST

WART	<i>Young Orphan</i>
KAY	<i>Wart's Foster-Brother</i>
ECTOR	<i>Wart's Foster-Father</i>
MERLYN	<i>Old Wizard</i>
ARCHIMEDES	<i>Owl of Merlyn</i>

NARRATOR: The Wart had lived on the country plantation of Sir Ector as long as he could remember. Sir Ector's castle stood in an enormous clearing in a still more enormous forest. It had a courtyard and a moat and a drawbridge and was a paradise for a boy to grow up in. "The Wart" was not the boy's real name, of course. It had been given to him by his older foster-brother, Kay.

WART: Kay, why do you call me "Wart"? My name is Arthur, you know.

KAY: Course I know. Wart just seems to fit you better. Plus, Art and Wart rhyme.

WART: Not really. (*pause*) What nickname should I give you then?

KAY: (*angrily*) None! I won't have someone like you calling someone like me a nickname! It's undignified!

WART: But it's okay to call me one?

KAY: Of course! I'm Sir Ector's proper son. You're just...the Wart. You ain't got a mother and father. I will be the lord of this plantation someday. And what will you be?

WART: Nothing, I guess.

NARRATOR: Although Kay was often rude to the Wart, the boy looked up to him. After all Kay *was* two years older than him, and the Wart was a natural-born hero-worshipper.

Sir Ector, a kind and jolly fellow, had always provided for the Wart like he was his own son.

ECTOR: Young boys need an eddication—yes, they do. Learning Latin and stuff. We'll find you boys a tutor, and as soon as hay season is done, you will begin your eddication.

NARRATOR: Sir Ector tied a knot in his handkerchief to remind himself to find the boys a tutor. But it was July, and real July weather, such as they had in Old England, and that meant hay-making.

WART: I love hay-making!

KAY: Why? It's hot, and the hay gets all stirred up when you fork it. It gets down your clothes and up your nose! I hate it!

WART: That's what I like about it. The hay's like an element—just like air or water. You breathe it in and plunge into it.

KAY: That's because you come from peasants. I'm a nobleman, and this type of work is beneath me!

NARRATOR: The first day of hay-making did not go well. They had pulled their wagons far out in the fields when a summer storm blew up. Kay and the Wart and the other laborers had to huddle under the wagons as lightning bolts flew overhead. (*booming thunder*) They were all shaking with fright—even Kay—although he tried to hide it.

KAY: You cowards! Nothing out there but a bit of lightning!

NARRATOR: But the Wart noticed Kay was shaking like the rest of them. The storm soon passed, and the soaked hay had to be abandoned for the day.

WART: Let's go get Cully the hawk and take him for a hunt. The rabbits will come out once the ground dries a bit.

KAY: I must carry Cully. He is *my* hawk—not yours.

WART: Of course, Kay!

NARRATOR: They made their way back to the castle—to the mews, the special room where the hawks were kept. The birds were all tied to their perches here. Kay put on one

of the gauntlets and called to Cully, but he would not come. So Kay picked him up and placed him on his wrist.

WART: He is acting strange. Perhaps we should not fly him. Hob says you shouldn't fly them if...

KAY: Of course, we're going to fly him! He's fine! What does Hob know? He's a peasant!

NARRATOR: So they took the hawk into the nearby forest to hunt. Once they had reached the verge of the forest, Kay threw his arm upward, and Cully took to the air.

KAY: So-ho! So-ho! Bring us a rabbit, Cully!

NARRATOR: Up went the hawk, swooping up like a child flung high in a swing, but he did not fly far. He perched in a high tree branch not far from the boys. Their two hearts stood still.

WART: I told you something was wrong!

KAY: Shut up! Let's just get him before someone finds out!

NARRATOR: As the two boys whistled, trying to lure the bird down from its high perch, Wart began to think of how much training had gone into Cully the Hawk. Hob the falconer had spent weeks training him. It would be a tragedy if the bird was lost. If Cully was lost, part of Hob would be lost, too. But Cully would not come down.

KAY: Fine! Leave him! Who cares?

WART: Hob will care! And Sir Ector will be furious if we have lost a hawk!

KAY: You get him down then! I'm going home!

NARRATOR: Kay stalked away—heading in the wrong direction for the castle.

WART: Kay, you are going the wrong way!

KAY: I knew that! Leave me alone!

NARRATOR: Kay turned, now aligned with the castle, and disappeared. The Wart stared up at the hawk and began to climb up the tree toward him.

WART: C'mon, Cully. C'mon.

NARRATOR: Yet when Cully saw Wart climbing toward him, the hawk took flight and flew to a tree deeper in the forest. Wart made his way to that tree and tried to climb it again, but Cully took flight once more. This was done many times until Wart was deeper in the forest and further from home than he had ever been.

WART: Now by the time I get home, the drawbridge will be up! Then what will I do?

NARRATOR: It was beginning to grow dark. The Wart remembered all the stories he had heard about dangers in the forest—wolves, wild beasts, outlaws, magicians—even dragons, but just small ones that hid under rocks and hissed like a kettle.

As the Wart was thinking of these things, an arrow whizzed out of the forest gloom. (*Shoom!*) It barely missed his head, and the boy did not stay long enough to see if another would follow. He ran through the

underbrush—shimmying under branches and crawling over roots until he was far away—and completely lost.

WART: Now I am completely lost. I will have no choice but to be eaten by a wolf, a dragon, or a magician—if magicians eat boys—which I expect they do.

NARRATOR: Just then he heard a clanking noise not far away, and he moved toward it. There was a clearing in the forest with a cottage in the midst. There was a very old gentleman drawing water out of a well with a chain.

MERLYN: (*angrily*) Drat this contraption! What a medieval mess! All my years of knowledge and learning, and I am reduced to this! Give me the good old days! Give me electricity and indoor plumbing!

NARRATOR: The old man was wearing a gown with the signs of the zodiac painted on it and a very tall, pointed cap on his head. He was also wearing horn-rimmed spectacles. The Wart decided to step forward and speak.

WART: Excuse me, sir. Can you tell me the way to Sir Ector's castle?

NARRATOR: The old man put down his bucket and adjusted his spectacles.

MERLYN: You must be the Wart.

WART: I...how did you know?

MERLYN: My name is Merlyn.

NARRATOR: Merlyn was staring at him with a benevolent curiosity. He had a long,

white beard and moustache that he stroked thoughtfully. The Wart could see that he was far from clean. Some sort of bird had built a nest in his hair, his robe was streaked with bird droppings, and a large spider was lowering itself from the tip of his hat.

MERLYN: Do you like...peaches?

WART: Very much, sir!

MERLYN: Well, they are not in season.

NARRATOR: Without another word Merlyn turned toward his cottage.

MERLYN: Well, come on!

NARRATOR: The Wart followed after him—picking up his water-bucket as he went. Merlyn led him into the cottage and into the most wonderful room he had ever seen. It was completely packed with curiosities. There were thousands of brown, leather-bound books, propped up against each other as if they had had too much to drink. There were stuffed birds of all kinds—and a stuffed crocodile, too—which seemed to wink its eye at the Wart as he entered. There was an ant farm, ink pots filled with all colors of ink, bizarre gadgets of all kinds, and a copy of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

WART: Oh my!

NARRATOR: The Wart poked an owl near him, believing it to be stuffed, only to realize it was alive. It opened its eyes and stared at him in anger.

WART: It's alive! What a lovely owl!

ARCHIMEDES: Hmph. There is no owl.

NARRATOR: Then the owl shut its eyes and looked the other way.

MERLYN: Archimedes, be polite! It is only a boy.

ARCHIMEDES: Hmph. There is no boy.

MERLYN: Say "How do you do?" properly now!

ARCHIMEDES: I will not!

WART: I can't believe he can talk!

MERLYN: Oh, he is highly educated. Give him one of these.

NARRATOR: Merlin pulled a dead mouse out from under his cap and gave it to the boy. The Wart offered it up to the owl, who took it from him with haughty indignation.

WART: I wish he would be my friend.

MERLYN: Perhaps he does not want to be friends with you until he knows what you are like. With owls it is never easy-come-easy-go. Now we should have some breakfast ourselves.

NARRATOR: For the first time the Wart noticed that the most perfect breakfast for two had been laid out on a table there before them. There were all kinds of fruit—even peaches—fish, chicken, and even a boiling pot of coffee. They seated themselves, and the Wart hungrily helped himself to the food.

MERLYN: Here. Have some mustard.

NARRATOR: The mustard pot got up and walked over to the Wart's plate. The pot uncurled its handles, and with one handle it lifted its lid to the boy courteously and with the other it ladled a spoonful of mustard onto his plate.

WART: What a mustard pot!

MERLYN: It is not a bad pot, but it does tend to put on airs! Shoo! Shoo!

NARRATOR: Merlyn soon finished his meal, leaned back in his chair, and lit an enormous pipe. Smoke curled forth from his lips.

WART: Good gracious! You breathe fire, too!

MERLYN: Don't be silly! It's a pipe, boy!

WART: This is the most amazing place I have ever been. But, tell me, how did you know I would be coming? How did you know my name? How did you know to set two places for breakfast?

NARRATOR: Merlyn smiled, removed his hat—as three mice fell out—and scratched his head.

MERLYN: Have you ever drawn in a mirror?

WART: No. Never.

NARRATOR: Merlyn turned and addressed the air next to him.

MERLYN: Get me a looking glass.

NARRATOR: A small, round mirror appeared in his hand.

MERLYN: No! Not that kind, you fool! A big one!

NARRATOR: A mirror about a foot square appeared in the place of the other one.

MERLYN: That's better. Now get me some pencil and paper.

NARRATOR: An unsharpened pencil and a newspaper appeared in his hand.

MERLYN: No! No! No! Take that back! Pencil and paper!

NARRATOR: After receiving an ink pen and some toilet paper, Merlyn flew into a rage and cursed the air around him.

MERLYN: Take it back! Take it all back! I'll just do it without the visual aides.

NARRATOR: All the items disappeared into thin air—including his pointed cap.

MERLYN: Blast you! Give me back my hat!

NARRATOR: A tall, black top hat appeared on his head.

MERLYN: Not *that* hat! I suppose you think you are funny! I want the hat I was wearing now—not the one I was wearing in 1890!

NARRATOR: The pointed hat reappeared on his head.

MERLYN: Hmph! And they call this service!

NARRATOR: Merlyn readjusted his glasses and turned back to the boy.

MERLYN: (*sigh*) The reason I knew to set breakfast for two is simple, boy. Most people live forwards in time, and the world goes forward, too. This makes things very easy for them. But, you see, I have lived my life backward in time—while the world around me was moving forward. It makes it very difficult. Like trying to write a message in a mirror. So I know the future. Some people call that second sight.

WART: But you don't know the past?

MERLYN: Exactly. The future is the past to me.

WART: I am confused.

MERLYN: So am I—most of the time. If you know what *is* going to happen to people, but not what *has* happened to them, it makes it difficult to prevent bad things from happening at all. (*pause*) Wait a minute. Have I already told you this?

WART: I don't think so. I have only been here half an hour.

MERLYN: (*sadly*) So little time left...

NARRATOR: A large tear rolled down to the end of Merlyn's nose. Just then Wart felt something on his shoulder. It was the owl.

MERLYN: Don't jump. He's warming up to you. Shhh!

ARCHIMEDES: How do you do, boy?

NARRATOR: The Wart was overcome with happiness.

WART: Oh, I am so happy! I shall call him Archie! Archie the Owl!

ARCHIMEDES: No, you will not! You might as well call me Hooty—or Bubbles!

NARRATOR: Archimedes flew from the Wart's shoulder in a huff.

MERLYN: Owls are the noblest and wisest of creatures and cannot stand to be made to look silly.

WART: I am sorry.

ARCHIMEDES: No bother, boy. I can see you spoke in ignorance.

MERLYN: Well, now that we have finished breakfast, I think we should all three find our way back to Sir Ector. Excuse me a moment.

NARRATOR: Merlyn turned around to the breakfast things and spoke in a stern voice.

MERLYN: Wash up!

NARRATOR: At this all the plates and silverware scrambled down off the table, the cloth emptied the crumbs out of the window, and the napkins folded themselves up.

WART: Are you really coming all the way home with me?

MERLYN: How else can I be your tutor?

NARRATOR: At this the Wart's eyes grew rounder and rounder, until they were about as big as the owl's.

WART: Do you mean it? Now my days will never be boring again!

MERLYN: What? Do you think education is just a distraction? Something you do only when there is nothing else to do?

WART: Umm...no?

MERLYN: Education is the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your body, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics. The only way to relieve such sadness is to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. Education is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. So don't forget it!

WART: I won't, Merlyn. I won't!

NARRATOR: When Wart and Merlyn returned to Sir Ector's castle, a shout went up. (*shouts of surprise*) A crowd rushed out to meet them. The Wart, carrying Cully proudly on his arm, started talking before he was halfway over the drawbridge.

WART: Look! I have been on a quest! I was shot at with arrows! The owl is called Archimedes! This is my tutor, Merlyn. It was terrible in the forest! Merlyn made the plates wash up! Hello, Hob! Look, we have got Cully!

NARRATOR: Hob the falconer came forward and looked at Wart so proudly that the boy turned red.

WART: Merlyn caught him!

NARRATOR: Kay appeared with the other delighted welcomers.

WART: Oh, Kay! Look, I have got a magician for our tutor! He has a mustard pot that walks!

KAY: I am glad you are back.

NARRATOR: Sir Ector kissed the Wart on both cheeks but then spoke gruffly.

ECTOR: Well, well, well. What the devil have you been doing? You set the whole household upside down!

NARRATOR: But inside Ector was proud of the Wart for staying out after a hawk.

WART: Oh, sir! I have been on that quest you said for a tutor, and I have found him. He is called Merlyn. He is a great magician and can make things come out of the air.

ECTOR: Ah, a magician. (*cautiously*) White magic, I hope?

MERLYN: Assuredly.

ECTOR: You have some references, I assume.

NARRATOR: Merlyn held out his hand.

MERLYN: References!

NARRATOR: Instantly there were some heavy tablets in Merlyn's hands. Sir Ector was not impressed by this trick.

ECTOR: He must have had those up his sleeve the whole time. (*grumbling*) Now, let's see here. This reference here is from Aristotle. This one is from Hecate, Goddess of Darkness. And someone called the Dean of Cambridge University. Never heard of him. I suppose these will do. Got any more tricks, wizard?

MERLYN: (*shouting*) Tree!

NARRATOR: At once there was an enormous mulberry growing in the middle of the courtyard.

ECTOR: They do it with mirrors.

MERLYN: Snow! And an umbrella.

NARRATOR: An inch of snow had fallen before they could speak, and all were trembling in the wintry blast. Sir Ector's nose was blue and had an icicle hanging from the end of it. All except Merlyn had a ledge of snow upon their shoulders. The wizard stood in the middle, holding his umbrella high because of the owl.

ECTOR: (*shivering*) It m-m-must be done by hypnotism! (*pause*) That will do very well. I'm sure you'll make an excellent tutor for teaching these boys.

NARRATOR: The snow stopped immediately, and the sun came out. Merlyn folded up his umbrella and handed it back to the air, which received it.

ECTOR: I'm impressed by you, Wart. Imagine a boy doing a quest like that by himself. Well, well, well! Wonders never cease.

KAY: I don't think much of it as a quest. He only went after a hawk, after all.

ECTOR: And got the hawk, too, Kay.

KAY: Oh well. I bet the old man caught it for him.

NARRATOR: The voice of Merlyn was suddenly terrible.

MERLYN: (*booming*) Kay! Will you always be proud and arrogant? Your sorrow in life comes from your own mouth!

NARRATOR: At this everybody fell uncomfortably silent. Kay, instead of flying into his usual passion, hung his head.

MERLYN: Sorry. That might have been an overreaction. (*pause*) Perhaps this will make up for it.

NARRATOR: Merlyn made a little silver hunting knife come out of the air, which he gave to Kay to put things right. Kay loved it and walked into the castle displaying it proudly.

MERLYN: I did not mean to hurt the boy's feelings, Wart. It's just me looking backward—or forward—again.

WART: Kay doesn't mean to be unpleasant.

MERLYN: Yes, I know. He was one of those people who will be neither a follower nor a leader. He will be only an aspiring

heart, impatient in the failing body which imprisons it.

NARRATOR: A look of sadness passed over the old wizard's face.

MERLYN: But not you, Wart. That is why I must teach you. There are great things in store for you.

WART: Do you really think so?

MERLYN: Think so? I *know* so!

NARRATOR: And so Merlyn came to live at the castle of Sir Ector, and the education of the Wart truly began.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Characterization:** How are Wart and Kay different? Think about their positions in life as well as their personalities.
2. **Dramatic Irony:** The real identity of the Wart is Arthur, the heir to the throne. We know this, but in the story he does not. How does this affect the way that the reader views his character?
3. **Imagery:** What are some examples of descriptive imagery from this script-story?
4. **Predict:** How will the Wart's adventures with Merlyn prepare him to be king? What types of lessons might Merlyn teach him?
5. **Characterization:** Why is Merlyn constantly confused about what has happened and what will happen? Does this make him more or less likeable as a character? Explain.
6. **Character Motivation:** Why doesn't Merlyn tell the Wart that he is really the

son of the former king? Why does he choose to keep this information a secret?