



# The Complete King Arthur: Many Faces, One Hero

*John Matthews, Caitlín Matthews*

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## **The Complete King Arthur: Many Faces, One Hero** John Matthews, Caitlín Matthews

A comprehensive examination of the historical and mythological evidence for every major theory about King Arthur

- Explores the history of every Arthur candidate and the geographical arguments that have placed him in different locations
- Examines 1,800 years of evidence for Arthur's life and the famous series of 12 battles fought against the Saxons in the 6th century
- Reconstructs the history of the 6th century in Britain, when the first references to Arthur and the core events of his reign appear

Few legends have had the enduring influence of those surrounding King Arthur. Many believe the stories are based on historical truth. For others Arthur represents the archetype of the brilliant monarch reigning over a fairy-tale kingdom, offering his knights the opportunity to prove their mettle in battle and find gnostic illumination through initiation into sacred mysteries like that of the Grail.

Presenting the culmination of more than 40 years' research, John and Caitlín Matthews examine the historical and mythological evidence for every major theory about the existence of King Arthur. Drawing on modern techniques in archaeology and scholarship, they reconstruct the history of the 6th century in Britain, the period when the first unambiguous references to Arthur appear. They explore the history of every Arthur candidate, the geographical arguments that have placed him in different locations, and the evidence for his life and famous battles fought against the Saxons. Was the greatest British hero of all time not a king but a 2nd-century Roman officer active around Hadrian's Wall in Cumbria? A 5th-century soldier who operated in areas as far apart as Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, or Brittany? Or an entirely mythical fiction that provided a figure of light during a dark period of British history?

Examining other literary figures from the 5th century such as Vortigern and Ambrosius, the authors also break down the plots of all the major Arthurian romances, including those by Chretien de Troyes, Sir Thomas Malory, and Robert de Boron, to reveal the historical events they are based on. Piecing together the many fragments that constitute the image of Arthur, both the man and the myth, the authors show how each face of Arthur has something to offer and how his modern popularity proves the enduring power of the hero-myth, truly earning Arthur the title he first received in the 15th century: The Once and Future King.

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