



## *Arturo el Rey*

launches the trilogy

### *Excalibur Regained*

***King Arthur promised to return when the world needs him.***

—  
***How bad does it have to get?***

Bio-terrorists unleash a plague that crumbles civilization and forces young Marine Lance Corporal Art Reyes into a leadership position. Meanwhile a girl named Shanna struggles to survive the chaos of the new dark age. But fate inexorably draws the two together, the reincarnated **King Arthur** and **Lady Guinevere**.

#### BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

##### Connections to Arthurian Legend

Various aspects of the novel reflect the legend. If you are unfamiliar with these, get some quick background by renting movies on the subject. Of the many, *Camelot* and *Excalibur* may be most helpful for a wide range of time and for getting to know characters and personalities.

Discuss how these events from *Arturo el Rey* relate to the legends:

1. Art's nightmare of dying with a lance in his chest and having an overwhelming sense that he has failed. Consider further, even in King Arthur's time, do you think he failed completely?
2. The clouds surrounding Art's paternity.
3. During Art's near-death experience, the importance of seizing Excalibur along with the difficulty of doing so.
4. Winning Shanna's father over to his side.
5. Nilson denies having Merlin's magical powers. Any evidence to the contrary?
6. Shanna's feisty personality.
7. Nilson's dread that characters other than he, Art, and Shanna might also be reincarnated to replay the legend.
8. Which characters besides the obvious ones may also be reincarnated from Arthurian days to the present? Give evidence. (Some may only show up in subsequent books of the *Excalibur Regained* series.)
9. Can you think of other related events?

##### Characterization

1. Art's need to be trusted vs. (a) doubts of the people and (b) Shanna's reluctance to trust anyone other than her father.
2. Art tries to give other people what they want/need. At what point does this good trait become a liability (a) with Tom and (b) with Gloria? With people in general what truth does he learn regarding this effort?
3. What other heroic traits does Art have? How does Eddie Reeves use Art's good traits against him?
4. What good traits does Shanna have, and how do they hurt or help her?
5. Eddie and Gloria each believe they are in the right, the heroes of their own stories. How does each justify his/her actions?
6. How does Art feel about the hero worship in which Steven Dubois holds him. Does Steven ever change in this regard? If so, when and in what respect?
7. Did Art's troubled, anything-but-noble youth help or hinder in preparing him to meet his destiny?
8. What character do you like best and why?
9. What character do you dislike most and why?

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### The Writer's Style

1. Did each character's "voice" seem to fit? Discuss.
2. Consider word choice, images, descriptions, and scenes. Which did you especially like and why?

### The Reincarnation Aspect

Even if you do not believe in reincarnation, were you able to suspend your disbelief as you read the book? And do you think it served a purpose here? There are no right or wrong answer to the following, but you may have fun thinking about the meaning of certain intentionally ambiguous statements from the book.

10. During Art's near-death experience, the all-knowing entity tells Art, "Many times mankind has come to the brink of understanding, more times than history records, only to annihilate all it has learned."
11. Art's father tells Art, "I wish I could make it up to you." Merlin says, "Oh, you will. We all have missions."
12. Nilson muses to himself, *True there were a few parallels [to their past lives], but not all was happening as it had to Arthur. There was no reason to worry. No reason at all!*

### What a few great thinkers have said about reincarnation

"I hold that when a person dies,  
His soul returns again to earth;  
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise  
Another mother gives him birth.  
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain  
The old soul takes the road again."

-- John Masefield, England's sixteenth poet laureate

"I could well imagine that I might have lived in former centuries and there encountered questions I was not yet able to answer; that I had to be born again because I had not fulfilled the task that was given to me."

-- Carl Jung, Swiss psychiatrist, in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

"An important question to ask is whether the idea of reincarnation helps us to answer some of the questions which all thoughtful Christians ask... Reincarnation offers a key here to unlock many problems...It is incredible that (Hitler) can by now be a bright angel making progress in a purely spiritual realm! One speculates that he will be found either among the devils, or that, when light comes to him, he will *choose* to come back, perhaps as a slave in a Siberian mine, and seek to 'work out his own salvation,' and to find his way to the graduation class in God's school."

-- Leslie D. Weatherhead, protestant minister, in his book, *The Christian Agnostic*

Through the travail of ages,  
'Gainst the pomp and toils of war,  
Have I fought and strove and perished  
Countless times among the stars.  
As if through a glass and darkly,

The age old strife I see  
I fought and died  
With many names, but always me."

-- General George Patton in the movie, *Patton*

Author's note: General Patton claimed to remember being a soldier fighting in a battle between ancient Romans and Carthaginians, and later another soldier suffering defeat with Napoleon's army.

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### What other writers say about this book:

"Hall's tight, energetic prose illuminates a futuristic world gone wrong after bio-terrorists destroy most of earth's population. In a gritty and surprising revisit to the legend of King Arthur, Hall creates compelling characters faced with no less a task than finding true love and saving the world."—from **M.K. (Marcia) Preston**, winner of the Mary Higgins Clark Award for *Song of the Bones*.

"In *Arturo el Rey*, Joan Hall successfully revives the gallant legend of King Arthur and, more importantly, the heroic ideal itself in a contemporary setting. Though the tale is particularly chilling in light of the events of 9/11, it's universal enough to fit any era. Joan's writing style allows the reader to become directly involved, engaged in the story line, an active participant rather than a passive observer. In it's ambitious scope, *Arturo el Rey* is somewhat reminiscent of Stephen King's *The Stand*, and I suspect it will last through generations."—**Harvey Stanbrough**, Pulitzer Prize-nominated poet, editor, and author of *Writing Realistic Dialogue & Flash Fiction*.

"Joan Hall's *Arturo el Rey* is a most sabroso dish—tense near-future Texas thriller, timeless tale of the Arthurian mythos, redemptive story of love. This salsa version of the Grail Myth is worth questing for from many angles."—**Don Webb**, author of *Endless Honeymoon* and *Security Alert*.