



The ABC's of PERCIVAL

An alphabetical analysis of the character, Percival de Gales,
from my Arthurian retelling of *Percival*

Warning: This contains big spoilers!



Adventure

Percival's tale is one of adventure! Since he was a young boy, Percy thrived on the idea of leaving the Waste Forest to embark on the adventure of a lifetime: to serve King Arthur as a knight of Camelot.



Blanchefleur

Though he gives her the nickname "Lily", Blanchefleur is the lady with whom Percy falls deeply in love, and who will later become his wife. Blanchefleur is Percy's first and final love interest in his life, and he would rearrange the stars for her if she asked it. She gives his life a whole new level of meaning; something to fight for, to fear losing, to love unconditionally. It's thanks to Blanchefleur that Percy also learns the importance of staying true to one's word, and staying true to *oneself*.



Celtic

Just like the original story of *Perceval le Gallois*, written by Chrétien de Troyes, this adaptation is traditionally Celtic in culture. Percy's homeland, as well as Camelot, are both in Celtic countries and this would surface in Percival's every day life. His knightly clothing would consist of Celtic knotting in its design, and he would likely bare the Celtic symbol of the Triskelion on his horse's accessories, his hauberk, and possibly even his shield. His every day food would also be Celtic; this would include smoked meats, salted fish, lots of dairy, brown bread, boiled cabbage, pottage, and any other foods that were available in medieval England.

aring

Percy is nothing short of daring. When he was a boy, his mother forbade him to speak to any strangers that passed by in the forest—but his heart told him otherwise. As he got older, he dared to go after his dream, even when forbidden to. In both his interactions with King Bors and King Gruffydd, Percy even dares to contradict them when he feels they are wrong. A “bold tongue”, his mother would claim he had. But his tongue allows him to speak up when something’s not right, and to fight for what he believes in.

xample

Growing up, Percy had no other example of adult behavior, other than his mother. This is a major reason why he tends to hold tight to friends—he learns from them every day. His lack of *male* example throughout his childhood is also why his mannerisms tend to appear the tiniest bit feminine at first, and not entirely “masculine”. Feminine verbal and physical mannerisms are the only example of daily behavior he’s had, until he arrives in Camelot.

ire

Fire is a major symbol in Percy’s tale. Fire represents wrath, anger, revenge. Anguerion, Percy’s enemy, is a blacksmith; his work and his entire life revolve around flames. In fact, fire is what Anguerion uses to murder Percival’s mother and destroy his childhood home. Once Percy is overtaken by thirst for revenge, “fire” is the description used to describe what fuels him. But he soon discovers the impact of a burn; not just on himself but on others he loves. Fire is also used ironically. Since flames are what Anguerion uses to kill an innocent, an “inner” fire of his own leads to his death. Once Percival embraces his true power, he attempts to heal Anguerion through spiritual touch. But Anguerion’s soul is too far gone...and Percival’s healing only turns into a spiritual “fire” that devours Anguerion from the inside out.



Gawain, Galahad & Gournemant

The three most important men in Percy's life all have names that start with a "G"!

- **Gournemant** is Percy's father, and someone that he has mixed feelings about. While he loves his father, a part of him remains angry that Gournemant left Percy's mother and late brothers in Wales for years, wondering whether or not he was alive. But another part of him still admires the fact that Gournemant is a seasoned knight, and Percy learns to respect his unwavering loyalty to Algara.
- **Galahad** plays an important role as Percy's squire. Galahad not only admires Percy greatly during the Mercian Tournament—but also leaves his abusive master and runs away to Camelot to serve Percy forevermore, only months later. Gal keeps Percy down to earth and remains a constant support for him, even on his darkest days.
- The most prominent out of the three, however, is **Gawain**. Forever Percy's role model and best friend, Gawain looks out for Percy from day one. Though he starts off as being closed off to attachment, Gawain can't help but be heart-warmed by Percy's kindness and optimism. Percy looks up to Gawain as a hero, a brother at arms, and someone who will kick his behind when he needs it.



Honey Cakes

Welsh honey cakes, or "honey biscuits", as he calls them, are Percy's favorite treat. His mother made them throughout his childhood on special occasions. When he tragically discovers the ruins of his home, Percy even finds a pot of day-old biscuits over the hearth. But that doesn't stop him from eating a batch all to himself each spring in Camelot for the rest of his years!



Injustice

Percy is an advocate for fighting injustice. Once he meets Lily and discovers that some people are treated differently for looking unlike everyone else, he decides to make it one of his primary causes to fight for. People with albinism were considered “witches” or “demons” in Percy’s time and were treated as disposable items. Therefore, he makes it one of his leading missions as a Knight of the Round Table to help fight injustice and oppression throughout Britain.



Javelin

Percy’s signature weapon is a sturdy, wooden javelin. He’s used javelins since he was able to hold one—to hunt rabbits and deer, and to catch fish. As he goes through the beginning stages of knighthood, he realizes he can use it as a weapon for defense and attack, instead of just catching supper. He keeps about four or five at home in the forest—but he takes one with him that he uses throughout the story, which will eventually become his most prized weapon of all; similarly to Arthur’s sword, “Excalibur”. His javelin is so much a part of him, he’s even memorized the curves of the wood as it rests in his hand, and has carved several designs into it over the years.



King Arthur

Arthur is the king of Camelot, and the High King of Britain. His reputation as a fearless warrior, a wise king, and a kind man even reaches Percy in the Waste Forest. It’s one of the main reasons why Percy decides to leave home and serve him in the first place!



Light

Light is another major symbol in Percy's tale. Though the use of light in the story starts out figuratively, it becomes a physical and literal symbol as the tale goes on. For Percival, the "light" is a sensation in which a sense of calmness envelops him, putting him in a mental state where he is able to feel every fiber of his being—including a warmth in his chest that cancels out all feelings of darkness. Percival has experienced this sensation multiple times as a child. But he feels it more often as he gets older, as he finds himself in more and more dangerous situations. The light protects him and provides him a clear head for fighting, making him almost untouchable in combat. By the end of the story, Percival discovers that he can use the light literally, by touching others in great internal pain and using the light to heal them, ridding them of darkness.



Merlin

Merlin, the great sorcerer of Britain, is a guide for Percy throughout his adventure. But he's also human—sort of—and Percy discovers that as time goes on. Merlin teaches him that everyone, even great sorcerers, makes mistakes; the important thing is to learn from them. Merlin sees the best in Percy from day one, even when Percy doesn't see it in himself. From the beginning, Merlin prophesizes that Percy will bring great joy and save Britain when the time comes—and so insists Arthur give Percy a chance when he first arrives in Camelot. Thanks to Merlin, Percy learns the wisdom of mercy, and learns that his kindness is not a weakness but a source of great power. Merlin also knows about Percy's "light" before Percy discovers it himself, and continues to guide him in how to use his gift as years go on.



ew

Everything that happens in Percy's tale is new to him! He's lived an abnormally sheltered life up until his seventeenth birthday—and therefore, just about everything he experiences is a first! This includes even the simplest of activities, like talking with other men his age, eating supper with a group of people, watching children play, sleeping in a real bedroom, fighting with a sword, participating in group activities, being romantic—even wearing clothes made out of silk. (Not to mention armor!) Everything that would seem like every day living is a new experience for Percy, which makes his adventure all the more exciting.



utsider

Not only is Percy Welsh in a time and place where Welshmen were considered foolish and slow-minded, but his initial behavior in Camelot quite gives away his upbringing. A Welshman raised in a forest by no one but his mother might as well be the definition of an “outsider” in a giant city like Camelot. However, while being an “outsider” might make his adventure a challenge at first...others he meets along the way secretly find this relatable. Gawain, for instance, was born the pagan prince of the Orkney Isles; a Nordic region of Scotland. He was certainly treated as an “outsider” when he first came to the newly Christian Camelot, as a teenager. Lily also feels like an outsider in Algara at first, because of her physical appearance and sheltered upbringing in her manor. Lancelot comes from France—where the culture is entirely different from England's. His first experience in Camelot also made him feel like an outsider, though he'd never admit it to anyone. Even King Arthur, himself, had his fair share of this treatment; a prince raised as a commoner, then crowned king because he pulled a sword out of a stone. So while Percy is treated at first like he doesn't belong, many at the Round Table find themselves relating to him more than they let on.



ure of Heart

The curse in this tale can only be broken by one thing: a pure heart. Percival was pure of heart since childhood—all the way up until tragedy struck, and his heart immediately turned to revenge. Thus our hero ends up having re-learn the true meaning of purity. For this story, that meaning is *mercy*. Percy learns that forgiveness, kindness and love—all forms of mercy—are the things that can heal a stone-cold heart. And to get anywhere in the world, healing must take place, not revenge. Lily, likewise, has learned this growing up. And when the time is needed most for a savior to free Britain, Lily's mercy toward everyone in her life ends up breaking the curse. Her pure heart—combined with Percy's "light" that comes with his newfound purity—end up saving the day together.



uestions

Since everything is new to him on his adventure, Percy asks a lot of questions! He wants to know how where things are geographically, how tournaments work, what knights do, what cream puffs taste like, how to remove his armor when nature calls, what dogs sound like, what that strange desire is that burns in him when he kisses Lily. The original story by Chrétien de Troyes focuses on the most important question: Why the Fisher King has presented him with a Holy Grail, and what it means. In the original tale, because Percival doesn't ask this one question, he is unable to break the curse, and therefore doesn't become the hero Corbenic needs in the end. In this new retelling, though it doesn't focus so much on that particular question, Percy's thirst for revenge affects his heart, and *this* is what causes his "downfall" before he rises again. The major question becomes what makes someone truly pure of heart.



Revenge

Needless to say, revenge is another major theme in this tale. Not only does Percy seek it upon Anguerion, but Anguerion seeks it upon the rest of the world for his cruel childhood. Morgaine also seeks revenge upon King Arthur for “taking her throne”, as well as on Lily for exposing her murderous intent to Arthur years ago. Even Merlin starts our story by casting a curse upon the Fisher King out of revenge for how cruelly he treats the people of Corbenic. Thankfully, in the end, both Merlin and Percy learn of the danger of revenge and learn to rise above it.



Sparrow Knight

Percy earns the nickname, “Sparrow Knight”, in the Mercian Tournament and it follows him all throughout Britain. This is because of his fighting style—which is wild and almost tribal, thanks to his experience with hunting in the forest—compared to the typical “civilized” sword fights the other knights use. Queen Annis of Mercia says in front of all that Percy “at first resembles a small, innocent sparrow on the field—and then, when least expected, turns into a sparrow *hawk*; a bird of prey, fierce and wild.” The sparrow also represents home for Percy, as red house sparrows were his constant companions in the forest as a child. Children also call Percy the “Sparrow Knight” because of his red hair and red clothes, similar to the colors of a red sparrow’s feathers.



Talent

Percy has more talent than just on the battlefield! Growing up, he and his mother had no other source of entertainment but themselves. His mother, therefore, taught him a few traditional Welsh dances and several commonly known songs throughout Britain; the two of them would sing and dance for fun quite often. Little does Percy know that his singing voice and knack for rhyming will come in handy when his and Gawain’s life are on the line! His love for music is also what first coaxes Lily to open up to him; it’s the first thing they realize they have in common.



Unique Traits

Aside from talent, Percy has quite a few physical features that make him stand out. He has bright red hair that falls below his ears in curly tufts. He has freckles that dot almost his entire body. He even has a thick Welsh accent. But most importantly, he has astonishingly blue eyes that hold his inner “light”, and their shade of blue sometimes changes depending on his mood. As a child, and in the beginning of our tale, his eyes are blue as the sky. As the story goes on, and as he faces more and more challenges, the shade of blue deepens...and grays with anger. Almost the color of murky seawater. By the time revenge almost overtakes him fully, the little girl Mhylla even notices. She points out that his eyes were so dull and gray when he had attempted murder, but are now “really, *reeeeally* blue.” In the final battle, when Percy embraces the full power of his newfound purity, his “light” returns, causing his eyes to almost glow. They become so inhumanly clear and filled with light, that everyone who looks him in the eyes is filled with an indescribable sense of peace, and eventually must look away before the light grows too intense. Percy’s traits are not only unique but powerful.



VOWS

This tale is filled with vows and promises. Throughout Percy’s adventure, he makes so many promises to different people—kings and commoners, alike—that he eventually has to make a mental list. The most important on his list is his mother, to whom he vowed always to be merciful and kind to everyone. This he breaks when his sole purpose becomes exacting revenge on Anguerion. Because of this, he also almost breaks his vow to return to Lily and marry her in Camelot. He becomes so obsessed with finding his enemy that the two most important vows he made fall to the wayside. But just in time, little Mhylla reminds him of what it truly means to be pure of heart. And from that day forward, he strives to keep all vows and promises until the end of his days.



ales

Percival is from Wales, the country neighboring England. He was raised in the Waste Forest, which today is part of the Wye Valley in south Wales, in the town of Chepstow. However, though Percy was raised in isolation, his mother knew he would one day have to leave home and start his own life. So she raised him with as much of a traditional Welsh upbringing as she could. This surfaces in many areas of his personality. The Welsh were, and still are, very partial to oral storytelling—hence where his love of song, dance and verbal expression come from. He was raised on bedtime stories of dragons and mythical creatures, since in Percy's time, the Welsh believed that their land was filled with wild beasts, tinkering faeries and mystical doorways to magic realms. So his sense of enthusiasm for new adventures never ceases, even as he grows older. He was also raised not only on food from the forest, but Welsh food that his mother would often fetch from Tintern. This would include fish, seafood, cawl, rabbit, bara brith, oat cakes, berries, porridge and goat's milk, amongst others. And since Wales is so close to England, Percy's mother also made sure to teach him both languages of Welsh and English at a young age. So Percy can fluently speak both—and often resorts to muttering in Welsh when frustrated.



outhful

The Waste Forest gave Percy a golden (albeit lonely) childhood. For seventeen years, Percy had no choice but to provide himself his own entertainment, and therefore relied on his imagination constantly. He even created his own “language” with the birds and other forest animals that consisted of clicks and whistles. This carries through to when he's older and out on the adventure of a lifetime. His childlike innocence never quite leaves. Even at the end of our tale, once he's gone through such a large maturation, he still retains his sense of youth. Even decades later, beyond our story, Percy will become an older man and endure darker times and have children—and grandchildren—with Lily as the light over Camelot dims. But his sense of imagination and youthfulness will never fade.



Zealous

Zealous is the perfect word to describe Percy. Through almost every step of his adventure, he is filled with wonder, alive with joy, bursting at the seams with excitement to explore the world he's been forbidden to see for so long! There are challenges, of course. Getting captured by bandits, meeting a long-lost father, near-death experiences, cruel blacksmiths and evil witches are not much to be overjoyed about. But he still strives to face each day with optimism. His zeal may make him an annoyance to more subdued Camelot knights...but it's still an enjoyment to the many others who appreciate Percy's thrill of life. No matter where he goes, Percy always ends up infecting someone with his zealous personality, in a way that makes their day a little brighter.