

Dangerous visitors

These questions will help you practise:

- ★ explaining inferences
- ★ giving the meaning of words in context
- ★ retrieving information and identifying key details
- ★ explaining the meaning of words in context
- ★ summarising main ideas.

The next morning I was up early. I met Merlin on the ramparts. He was looking out over the mist-covered marshes. There were three horses plodding slowly along the causeway, legless in the mist. 'Look,' said Merlin sadly. 'They have come. I feared they might.'

'Who are they?' I asked. As they came closer, I noticed that one of them had a child riding in front of her.

'Those are your three half-sisters, Arthur, your mother Igraine's daughters by Gorlois, children of her first marriage. I have told you about them before. Elaine and Margawse have come to make their peace with you, I have no doubt. But do not trust them. Remember, neither Elaine nor Margawse have any great cause to love you. Your half-sisters they may be but both are widowed, and by you too. Pelinore might have killed their husbands, King Nantes and King Lot, but it was in your name that he fought them. Take care. Take care.'

'So the third must be Morgana Le Fey,' I said, 'the youngest.'

Merlin's eyes narrowed and a shiver came over him so that he had to lean against the ramparts to steady himself. 'I hoped never to see her here in Camelot,' he said. 'Of all the people on this earth, she is the one who most threatens you. She may look like an

angel, but she has the soul of the very devil, and all his evil powers too, powers that I can no longer stand against. In my youth I might have done, but not now, for my own powers are waning. Sometimes I think they are almost gone. Beware of her, Arthur, beware of her, I tell you. She would have your kingdom for herself and, if she cannot have it, then she will do all she can to destroy it, and you with it.'

'Who is the child?' I asked, but Merlin did not seem to want to answer. I asked again.

'You do not want to know,' Merlin replied, and he looked away quickly. 'Not on your wedding day. I will cast no dark shadows on such a day.'

As I looked at the three riders I was filled with a terrible sense of foreboding. 'You promised me once, Merlin,' I said, steeling myself, 'that you would never tell me the future unless I asked you to, nor deny me the truth if ever I asked it. I have never asked what shall become of me, or of my kingdom – although I know you could tell me. I do not want to know, for if I once know the end of it all and how I will get there, then there would be little reason to live my life through. If that child is part of my future, then tell me. Tell me at least who he is.'

Arthur, High King of Britain by Michael Morpurgo

1 Explain how you know that Merlin was expecting the visitors.

1

(1 mark)

2 ... *neither Elaine nor Margawse have any great cause to love you.*

What does the word *cause* mean in this sentence?

2

(1 mark)

3 Merlin advises Arthur not to trust Elaine and Margawse.

Explain why they are not to be trusted.

3

(3 marks)

4 Find and copy a phrase or sentence that tells you that Merlin is uncomfortable with the arrival of Morgana Le Fey.

4

(1 mark)

5 Explain why the word *waning* has been used to describe Merlin's powers.

5

(1 mark)

6 In the last paragraph, beginning *As I looked at the three riders...*, Arthur is *filled with a terrible sense of foreboding*.

Write **one** sentence that summarises his thoughts.

6

(1 mark)

/ 8

Total for
this text