

# **Wizards and Jedi: A Comparative Analysis Between Merlin and Mentors in *Star Wars***

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Merlin has fascinated audiences throughout the centuries due to his inscrutable nature and seemingly omniscient abilities. He is a figure outside of time who guides characters to their destinies and purposes. As the archetypal Wise Man, Merlin teaches magic, guides kings, and passes on wisdom to others. His presence continues to permeate much of modern pop culture, lending characteristics to characters in some of the most successful franchises. One such franchise, *Star Wars*, features numerous Merlin-like figures, Obi-wan Kenobi and Yoda chief among them. Modern audiences are still drawn to the image of the mysterious and alluring Wise Man because he represents the pinnacle of knowledge. By learning more about Merlin's role as a teacher and guide, we can better understand the necessity of mentors throughout all cultures, as well as gain a greater appreciation for those that have lessons to teach us.

By first examining texts of Arthurian literature in which Merlin's role as the advisor and mentor are most prevalent, and then comparing his character with similar individuals from various *Star Wars* films, this paper will provide a better understanding of the Wise Man archetype that has lasted throughout the centuries.

Merlin has always been portrayed as a Wise Man, yet few people realize that his talents were used for much more than simply helping Arthur attain a crown and sword. In Wace's *Roman De Brut*, Merlin helps numerous kings in their conflicts, lending each of them his wisdom. In this tale, Merlin first appears when summoned to help the king, Vortigern, build a castle which has continually fallen during construction. When

Vortigern informs Merlin that the wizard's blood is needed to keep the castle from falling, Merlin replies, "Under the foundation of your tower lies a pool that is broad and deep and that makes your tower crumble" (Wace 98). He further proves Vortigern's other prophets to be false when he informs the king that, "Down at the bottom are two sleeping dragons lying on two large stones. One of these dragons is white, while the other is crimson blood" as the prophets stand dumbfounded (98). Upon Vortigern's praise of the wizard, Merlin warns the king of future troubles, and predicts the succession of kings to come, stating,

Be very careful of the sons of Constantine...they'll do wrong to you to avenge your crime...Aurelius will be king first, but he will also die first, from poison. Uther Pendragon...will rule the realm after him, but he will...be poisoned by your heirs. Arthur, his son from Cornwall...will devour the traitors against him and will destroy your kinsmen. He will be valiant and fine and will wipe out all of his enemies. (99)

Of course, all that Merlin foretells Vortigern comes to pass, much to the traitorous king's dismay. This first encounter with a king reveals Merlin's unquestionable wisdom. All that he predicts occurs, and his status as the archetypal Wise Man is secured.

Merlin's help is sought once more when Aurelius takes the throne. Aurelius seeks to build a lasting monument so that his men who had fallen in battle and himself could be remembered forever. Merlin, who "had no equal when it came to creating and divining" suggests that Aurelius "bring over here the circle that the giants built in Ireland...so strong and heavy that no strength of men now alive can ever lift them" (99-

100). This ambitious task seems so impossible that it is all Aurelius can do not to laugh. Yet Merlin insists on the project stating, “Don’t you realize that brains are better than brawn? Strength is fine, but cunning is much better, since it often succeeds where muscles fail” (100). In these lines readers learn that, perhaps, Merlin’s magic is but another facet of knowledge – one that has yet to be comprehended and harnessed. Clearly, Merlin is a cunning character with knowledge beyond the average person’s ability to measure. In a time when force and brutality rules all, Merlin relies on the ability of the mind rather than the force of physical strength. As the Wise Man, he sees beyond the accepted norm that power is achieved through physicality and malice, understanding that intelligence can offer so much more.

Merlin’s help is needed once more when Uther succeeds his brother as king. Witnessing Uther suffer from his desire for Igrana, and knowing that the child conceived from this lust would be the “good, strong, and certain monarch you all know as King Arthur,” Merlin changes the king’s appearance to look like that of the Duke of Cornwall (104). Everything Merlin has done up to this point is for the benefit of the realm, and necessary for the coming of Arthur. As a Wise Man, Merlin sets forth events so that Arthur’s birth will come about and Britain will find its true king.

In the *Prose Merlin*, audiences attain more information about the life of the mysterious wizard of the same name. Merlin’s role as the Wise Man is revealed early on in the text, starting almost immediately after his birth. When a council of judges brings his mother to trial for the crime of fornication, Merlin stands before them, a mere child, and outwits their leader. He provokes the judge, stating, “I know my father better than you do yours. And your mother knows who fathered you better than mine knows who fathered me” (Robert 312). By

enraging the judge, Merlin takes the focus off of his mother and places blame elsewhere. Of course, when Merlin questions the judge's mother and reveals the truth of her adultery with a priest, she cries, "Dear son, in the name of God, forgive me! I cannot hide it from you: everything he said is true" (314). This scene establishes that the wisdom Merlin displays throughout Arthurian literature is thoroughly ingrained within him. His abilities do not come from practice or learning, but rather are within him from the start. Merlin says as much to the judge when he states, "a demon... gave me the ability to know all things said and done in the past... [but] our Lord... granted me the power to know the things that are to come" (314). This supernatural quality of Merlin's wisdom lends the wizard a heroic power, thus creating a more-than-human aspect to his character. Of Merlin's undoubtedly god-like powers and ability to shape the future, one critic states, "One would almost think him a demigod, or a god incarnated to influence the destiny of men...he is the demiurge, arranging a world he did not create but to whose equilibrium he contributes" (Markale 79). Merlin's powers as well as his ability to shape world events often give him this god-like stature, yet it is only another facet of the Wise Man archetype he fulfills.

In the *Suite Du Merlin* great emphasis is placed upon Merlin's role as the mentor. Throughout the text, he guides the young Lady of the Lake, Niviane, in the ways of magic until she ultimately surpasses Merlin's skills. Of this tale, Jean Markale writes, "Here we are in the presence of Merlin's professorial vocation. In this respect, he can be compared to a great druid deep in the forest, teaching the ancestral philosophy to those willing to follow his digressions" (90). Despite Merlin's lust for Niviane, and her hatred towards the wizard, the two otherwise play the parts of mentor and student as one should expect. While both remain at court, Merlin starts "to teach her

sorcery and enchantment, and she learned rapidly” (*Suite* 349). This statement appears early on in the text, establishing the teacher-student relationship between the two characters. And while the relationship is anything but healthy or stable, it fulfills its purpose as Niviane continues to learn the mysteries of the world with Merlin’s guidance.

Throughout the text, readers learn that Niviane is under Merlin’s tutelage, and even witness his power to foresee the future when the two visit the newborn Lancelot. Yet, upon their arrival at the Lake of Diana, Merlin exhibits the earliest signs of being ready to sacrifice his own power in order to pass on his tradition to another. Merlin tells Niviane of a treacherous woman named Diana, who through means of trickery killed her devoted lover Faunus. Taking a great liking to this story, Niviane decides to build herself a home upon the Lake of Diana (an unconscious decision that may reveal to Merlin her contempt for him). Yet, the wizard does nothing to prevent her rise to power from overtaking him. Instead he helps her along the way to becoming a more powerful sorceress.

Merlin’s cultivation of Niviane’s desire to betray him marks a conscious decision to pass on his role as the Wise Man in the Arthurian legend to another. Markale supports this argument, writing, “Merlin intentionally tells this story that so prefigures his own demise...Merlin cannot be the dupe of a game played by one he loves so madly. He is the master of magic, master of illusions created at will...but no longer master of his destiny” (103). In his own way, Merlin accepts that his time within the realm has almost ended. A new Wise Man (or woman) will be needed to help King Arthur in the years to come, and that is why “he had already taught the girl so many spells and so much magic that she knew more than anyone alive” (*Suite* 354).

Niviane displays her acceptance into this role as the

caretaker for Arthur and Camelot upon hearing Merlin's account of a perilous encounter involving the king. She voices her concern stating, "It is wrong of you to let him fall into such danger! You should always be at his court to protect him, not far away as you are" (355). Niviane's concern is important for two reasons: First, that her interest in the well-being of Arthur and his kingdom reveals her dedication to their cause and willingness to help them, and second, that Niviane acknowledges a fault in her own mentor. By noticing the imperfect nature of her mentor, Niviane exhibits her readiness to surpass the teacher.

Niviane goes on to bind Merlin within a tomb through the very same enchantments and spells that the wizard once taught her. While her method appears cruel and deceitful, it is actually a natural act within the mentor-apprentice relationship. Once Niviane exhibits her primacy in magic over Merlin, it becomes clear that he no longer has a useful purpose. While Niviane reaches the culmination of her power, Merlin recedes from the outside world, allowing the sorceress to fulfill her destiny as the Lady of the Lake. Markale writes,

Merlin's role is finished. He began his career very early, prophesying to King Vortigern...leading Uther Pendragon to victory; arranging the conception of the future King Arthur, having him crowned, and giving him useful counsel to stabilize the ideal society...Perhaps it is time now for the wise man to retire and ponder the dark times to come. (103-104)

Much like King Arthur, the wizard is destined to wait for a time when his help will be needed once more. Yet, Merlin has not totally abandoned Camelot and its heroes. Through his successor, Niviane, Merlin continues helping King Arthur and

his knights. In the end, the reader is left with the knowledge that “Niviane arrives [at a battlefield] in time to save Arthur from his foe by magically restoring him his sword Excalibur and its enchanted scabbard,” therefore witnessing the sorceress fulfill Merlin’s role as Arthur’s protector (363). She also fulfills Merlin’s role as the mentor “after having become the Lady of the Lake....by undertaking the education of young Lancelot, as well as that of Bohort, future hero of the quest for the Grail” (Markale 91). With Merlin out of the picture, Niviane is able to reach the height of her potential as both sorceress and mentor to the heroes of Camelot.

The Arthurian legend has evolved countless times throughout the centuries. Whether the tale involves a warrior king defending his people from invaders, or overly Christianized themes in a chivalrous kingdom, the characters and events have remained as favorites among large audiences. Nowhere is this more true than in modern pop culture; although names, settings, and forms of storytelling have changed, the characters and conflicts have remained largely the same. This holds more truth for Merlin than for any other character in Arthurian legend. Merlin’s transition into modern pop culture has brought forth many successful mentor characters across numerous forms of entertainment including novels, comics, television, video games, and movies. Perhaps one of the best examples of a modern Merlin character would be Obi-wan Kenobi in the successful *Star Wars* films.

The first time audiences hear of Kenobi in the original film, a young Luke Skywalker refers to him as “a strange old hermit” and Uncle Owen warns Luke, “That wizard’s just a crazy old man” (Lucas). And at the audience’s first glimpse of Obi-wan, he appears as a mysterious cloaked figure (along with eerie intro-music), scurrying frightened Sand People away. Director George Lucas’ decision to have Obi-wan appear as a

suspicious and eerie outsider fits well with Merlin's status in Arthurian legend. Merlin has always been a character outside of the time and society in which he interacts. He appears in times of peril (throughout the reign of four kings) to help restore order before returning to the mysterious place from whence he came. In correlation with this, Markale writes, "The image of the hermit is impressed upon us because it corresponds to the attitude of withdrawal attributed to Merlin, withdrawal from a society no longer capable of understanding his counsels or his warnings" (80). Kenobi and Merlin stand outside of their societies because those cultures no longer accept or trust in their beliefs and powers. The outsider view many hold of Merlin causes numerous characters to mistrust him, much like Uncle Owen in *Star Wars*. In the *Prose Merlin*, one of King Uther's barons attempts to prove that Merlin's prophecies are false by asking the wizard how he shall die three times, each time under a different disguise. Of course, every time the baron asks, Merlin tells him he shall die a different way, and in the end the would-be trickster dies of all three causes. Even when Merlin was a child, his gift of speech and prophecy were initially taken as works of the Devil. At one point his mother's servants claim, "This is no child, but a devil! He knows what we have said and done" (Robert 310). Both Merlin and Kenobi hold the position of the "strange old hermit" in each of their tales, lending both characters a sense of mystery that adds to the allure of the overall story (Lucas).

Obi-wan Kenobi establishes himself as the mentor archetype upon taking Luke Skywalker to his humble abode. The wizened, old Jedi explains to Luke the ways of the Force, and the fate of the destined youth's father, Anakin. He states, "The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us, and penetrates us; it binds the galaxy together" (Episode IV). Later, during Luke's

training aboard the Millennium Falcon, Obi-wan informs him, “You’ve taken your first step into a larger world” (Lucas). Luke’s training in the ways of the Force bears similarity to Niviane’s training in enchantments. Both characters start out as youths, unaware of how to harness the secret powers of the universe until a Wise Man archetype arrives to teach them the way. While Obi-wan teaches Luke to use the Force, Merlin “began to teach her [Niviane] sorcery and enchantment, and she learned rapidly” (*Suite* 349). Also, it’s worth noting that Merlin and Obi-wan play a role in the retrieval of a sword of power in both of their stories. While Obi-wan simply handing Luke his father’s lightsaber is not as dramatic as King Arthur pulling the sword from the stone, the correlation between the Hollywood film and Arthurian legend is certainly no accident.

Even Kenobi’s use of the Force is similar to Merlin’s mastery of magic in Arthurian legend. Just as the Jedi Master uses the Force to bend the weak-minded to his will in the famous scene in which he tells a group of stormtroopers, “These aren’t the droids you’re looking for,” Merlin often uses his cunning to convince others to do as he says (Lucas). Appearing more as an advisor than a wizard at times, Merlin uses his gifts give to counsel kings in certain situations. For example, after informing both King Aurelius and Uther of an impending Saxon invasion, he guides them stating, “Summon all your men, all your knights, rich and poor...and keep them with you at court. Then ask them to...spend the last week of June with you at the entrance to Salisbury Plain. There you must assemble your forces...in order to fight the enemy” (Robert 323). Of course, the brothers do exactly as Merlin commands, and the natives achieve victory at the cost of Aurelius’ life, just as the wizard predicted.

Merlin may appear to use his abilities in benefit of the kings he serves, but in reality he uses them to fulfill his larger

purpose: to help the Kingdom of Britain reach its full potential under the leadership of King Arthur. This purpose reveals itself when Merlin strikes a deal with Uther. He states, "If the king were willing to swear on holy relics that he would grant me what... I would ask of him, I would help him obtain the love of Ygerne" (337). And once Uther receives his night with Ygerne, Merlin proclaims, "I can tell you that you have fathered an heir. He will be the gift you have promised me, for you are not to keep him yourself, and you will grant me all your authority over him" (338). These lines reveal not only that Merlin is working towards creating a united country, but also that, in the way he speaks, the wizard commands the king. Using words such as "He will" and "you will grant me" suggests a status of authority (338). Therefore, Merlin's ability to bend others to his will greatly resembles Obi-wan's use of Jedi mind-tricks.

Once Kenobi and the other would be heroes arrive on the Imperial Death Star, the mysterious wizard battles his old pupil, Darth Vader. As we learn in later films of the Star Wars Saga, Darth Vader is actually Anakin Skywalker, Luke's father, who once was the greatest of all Jedi. At first, Kenobi sneaks around the Death Star purposely seeking out his old apprentice, but when the two finally engage in a fight, Kenobi states, "If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you could possibly imagine," before submitting to Darth Vader's blows (Lucas). Yet, instead of falling to the floor, dead, Obi-wan disappears, leaving nothing but his empty robes behind.

This scene bears striking similarities to the entrapment of Merlin in the *Suite de Merlin*. While Darth Vader battles with Obi-wan, Niviane binds spells to Merlin. But, instead of engaging in an actual fight, Niviane enchants her old master and leaves him inescapably trapped within a tomb. Merlin remains there, but never seems to die. Rather, the magician waits for a time when he will be needed again (much like King Arthur) so

that he may return. Similarly, Obi-wan only returns only when he is needed most, such as in the climax of *Episode IV: A New Hope*, when from beyond the grave he advises Luke to “use the Force” in order to destroy the Death Star (Lucas). He even returns in spirit numerous times throughout the next two films in order to help Luke understand his destiny.

The next time we see Obi-wan (in *Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back*), he appears to Luke in spirit form, and tells him, “You will go to the Dagobah system. There you will learn from Yoda, the Jedi Master who instructed me” (Lucas). Thus, Kenobi guides both the audience and Luke towards the next Wise Man archetype, Yoda.

Yoda also fits quite nicely in the shoes of the Merlin character, despite his height and green complexion. In fact, even his strange appearance correlates with the mysterious nature of Merlin. Just as the Arthurian wizard is oddly different from others in society (having been born the son of the Devil), so too is Yoda, if only in size and appearance. Also, the Dagobah system is reminiscent of the habitat in which Merlin is so comfortable: wild nature. Merlin is a physical manifestation of the old ways of the Celts; he performs ancient magical feats in a world ruled by Christianity. The book *Merlin: Priest of Nature* deals with this woodland image of Merlin extensively, stating,

The myth of Merlin and the legends that bring him to life clearly refer...to a naturistic type of religion like the religion of the Celts, or druidism. Unquestionably, Merlin is the man of the forest. If he has occasion to move in established society...he does not make his home there. He is seen arriving at Arthur’s court unexpectedly coming from somewhere else....He is...a marginal figure who deigns to enter the social world

only to give counsel, make prophecies, or perform a magic feat. As soon as he has accomplished his design he returns to his own domain. (Markale 113)

Merlin practices an outdated form of magic in a world dominated by Christianity, similar to Yoda, who practices the outdated ways of the Force in a world dominated by Imperial law and technology. Truthfully, Merlin rarely stays in one place for very long. Rather, he comes to accomplish some goal, before returning to the mysterious forest from whence he came. Therefore, Dagobah appears as a likely home for any Wise Man archetype in the *Star Wars* films. In a world filled with wondrous scientific creations such as lightsabers, droids, and even the ability to cruise from solar system to solar system at the simple flip of a switch, Yoda prefers to make his home in a place that has no, “cities or technology” according to Luke. And once audiences see Dagobah, the planet presents itself as an eerie location filled with strange wildlife and shrouded in as much mystery as fog. Such scenery is excellent for teaching Luke the ways of the Force, because it requires that he let go of the technology that rules the world, and trust in his feelings instead.

Yet, when audiences first meet Yoda, he appears as a simpleton that annoys Luke. This ploy is part of Yoda’s wisdom in that it tests the boy’s patience to see if he is worthy of training. Yoda’s appearance and speech contradict all preconceived notions Luke might have about powerful Jedi. After Luke takes one look at Yoda and proclaims that he is “looking for a great warrior,” Yoda responds, “Wars not make one great” (Lucas). This wise statement goes unnoticed by an ignorant and young Luke Skywalker, but it holds truth. Yoda appears feeble and dimwitted, but in reality he is far wiser and stronger than Luke. This first lesson is possibly the most important one that the

strange, old hermit teaches him. When Luke's training begins, Yoda constantly fills the young hero's mind with wise advice, teaching the boy truths such as, "A Jedi must have the deepest commitment; the most serious mind," and "Adventure; excitement; a Jedi craves not these things." These statements are critical to Luke's mental learning as he performs physical training all over Dagobah because they teach him the doctrine of the way of life he has chosen.

After the physical aspect of training is completed for the day, Luke enters a dream-like state and faces a darkness within himself. Although this aspect of guidance is not featured in Merlin's teaching of Niviane, it is nevertheless important to the overall learning of Yoda's apprentice. When Luke asks Yoda what resides in the cave where he feels an evil presence, the wise old alien simply states, "Only what you take with you," meaning that Skywalker will face himself both literally and metaphorically (Lucas). Within the reptile filled cave, Skywalker fights a phantom of Vader that actually turns out to be Luke, forcing the young Jedi to acknowledge that his father's blood flows through his veins for the first time, even if he does not yet understand the meaning of the confrontation. This encounter holds some similarities to Merlin in that the wizard is forced to acknowledge that he is the "the son of a demon who seduced [his] mother" (Robert 314). While Luke ultimately chooses to use the light side of the Force, similarly, Merlin decides to use his powers for the glory of God, rather than to serve the Enemy.

Yoda displays his vast understanding of the Force while teaching Luke how to move objects. When Luke seems unable to lift his X Wing fighter jet out of the swamp, Yoda states, "Do or do not, there is no try" (Lucas). In a state of frustration Luke storms off, bitterly claiming that Yoda asks "the impossible" (Lucas). Yet at this moment, Yoda closes his eyes and uses the

Force to lift the massive X Wing from the deeps of the swamp, and place it down before an astonished Luke. As the young apprentice proclaims, “I don’t believe it,” the wise Yoda answers, “That is why you fail” (Lucas). This memorable scene in which Jedi Master Yoda proves to Luke the power of the Force correlates with the power Merlin displays in Arthurian Legend. In Robert de Boron’s version of the tale of Stonehenge, Merlin decides to honor the fallen Aurelius Ambrosius by creating the massive monument with stones brought from Ireland. When Uther’s men saw the massive stones, “they thought this was sheer madness and said that even all of them together could not roll one of those stones over and that, please God, they were not about to load them onto their ships” (Robert 326). Yet, while Uther’s men call such a feat “madness,” Merlin simply states, “I shall keep my promise even without their help,” and “brought the great stones from Ireland by magic” (327). The importance of these Wise Men moving massive objects is that it reinforces the power each mentor has over the world. Clearly, both Merlin and Yoda have mastered mysteries of the universe that others have yet to comprehend.

When Yoda trains Luke further in the ways of the Force, he reveals a special power to the young Jedi. Much like Merlin, Yoda is able to use his power to see both past and future, stating, “Through the Force, things you will see, other places; the future, past; old friends long gone.” It is through this power that Luke is able to foresee the trap that the Empire has placed upon his friends in the cloud city of Bespin. Yoda’s mastery of this power mirrors Merlin’s own powers given at birth by both the devils of hell, and God. Merlin states, “He [Merlin’s Incubus father] gave me the ability to know all things said and done in the past...Our Lord...granted me the power to know the things that are to come” (Robert 314). The fact that both the wizard and Jedi Master have such power emphasizes the

knowledge they have gained that others can't comprehend. Both Merlin and Yoda appear are aware of things that have happened, and things that have yet to come.

When Luke faces Vader alone and learns that the Sith lord is his father, he is crushed. Yet the fact that Skywalker is able to survive the ordeal is owed in great part to the guidance he received from both Obi-wan and Yoda. Similarly, the greatness achieved by both King Arthur and Niviane is due in great part to the guidance of Merlin.

When next we see Luke, in *Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*, the apprentice already exhibits some of the Wise Man characteristics of his predecessors. Skywalker walks into Jabba's Palace wrapped in a dark cloak, much like the first appearance of Kenobi in the original film. He performs a mind-trick on Jabba's advisor, stating, "You will take me to Jabba now," and exhibits a confidence previously non-existent in the infamously whiney apprentice (Lucas). In this scene audiences are meant to realize that Skywalker has truly grown up, and is well on his way to surpassing his masters. Much like Merlin's apprentice, Niviane, Luke has reached the culmination of his powers. While Niviane goes on to protect and guide the heroes of Camelot, Luke must go on to end the tyranny of the Sith and the Empire in order to restore balance to the Force.

When Luke returns to Yoda to complete his training, the dying mentor states, "No more training do you require. Already know you that which you need" (Lucas). Struggling to accept his fate, Luke receives final words of encouragement from both Yoda and the spirit of Obi-wan. Yoda reminds Luke to be wary of the dark side of the Force, and Obi-wan tells him that "You cannot escape your destiny" (Lucas). These final words serve as closure to Luke's training. Once he confronts his father, and destroys the Emperor, Luke will have become a true Jedi. This fate is a challenge which he must face alone, yet as Obi-wan has

always reminds Luke, “The Force will be with you, always” (Lucas). Luke’s final departure from Dagobah marks the completion of his training, and the beginning of his final trial against evil. This is a crucial moment for the apprentice of the Wise Man because it means that the pupil is ready to surpass the master.

Whether reading of Merlin’s counsel with great kings and sorceresses, or watching Kenobi and Yoda train a young Jedi, audiences always enjoy stories that feature a Wise Man archetype. This is due to the fact that the Wise Man represents the culmination of human knowledge and understanding. Merlin is among the greatest and wisest of all Arthurian characters, using his abilities to help great people achieve wondrous things. Obi-wan and Yoda are the wisest of the characters in *Star Wars*, holding greater knowledge of the Force than any others in the original trilogy. Each of these characters adds a sense of mystery and wonder to the worlds in which they populate. Arthurian legend could never be so captivating if it were not for the mysterious nature of Merlin, for that is why so many works have been written on him. *Star Wars* would never have been so addictive had Kenobi and Yoda not been there to captivate both Luke and audiences with secrets of the Force.

The ability to know everything has always been a dream of mankind. That is why we study history so thoroughly, and work to understand the world through science and religion. The Wise Man fulfills this dream giving us hope that mankind can comprehend and control the mysteries of the universe. The Wise Man also reminds us that we do not know everything, but that there are those within our own lives that can teach us a great deal. These wise men can be teachers, grandparents or, according to Joseph Campbell, even doctors. He writes,

The doctor is the modern master of the mythological realm, the knower of all the secret ways and words of potency. His role is precisely that of the Wise Old Man of the myths and fairy tales whose words assist the hero through the trials and terrors of the weird adventure. (9)

While the modern Wise Man does not use magic to achieve his goal, his function remains the same. These people guide and mentor us through a scary world of uncertainties to help us become the adults we're destined to be.

Whether the Wise Man uses ancient magic, the Force, or even modern medicine, his purpose is fulfilled by helping confused youths on their way to greatness. We may not be destined to rule a united Britain, or master the ways of the Force, but that does not mean there is not a Wise Man in our own lives. Merlin resides in television shows, books, comics, movies, theater productions, videogames, and even in our families. He is the man or woman of higher learning that guides characters to safe passage through a hazardous world. He is the mother or father that helps us leave home and start our own adult lives. He is the teacher that opens our eyes to education that will enlighten us. He is the Wise Man, and he is here to stay.

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