

CREATIVE MIND



ACTIVITY BOOK
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THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

SUMMARY: An unfinished chivalric romance, it tells the story of young Perceval, kept in the dark by his mother about the world. After a fortuitous encounter with a knight, he decides to leave to become a knight himself. After a thousand adventures, he arrives at the castle of the Fisher King who keeps the holy Grail.

ORIGINAL TITLE: PERCEVAL, THE STORY OF THE GRAIL

ORIGIN: FRANCE

KEYWORDS: KNIGHT; SWORD, HONOUR

GENRE: ROMANCE/LEGEND*

AGE: 9–10 YEARS

* (Author: CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES)

NOTE: the story is a rewriting based on the original text, however some elements have been modified, omitted or cut to make the story shorter and more suitable for the children's age group. The whole part dedicated to the Knight Gawain has not been dealt with, preferring to focus the story on the figure of Perceval.

THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

Long ago, in a forest far away from the rest of the world lived a young man named Perceval, and his mother.

The woman, who had lost her husband and two sons to wars and battles, had decided to hide in the depths of the Gaste Forest, so that nothing could happen to them. There she had raised her son as in a large nest, surrounded and protected by the endless greens of tall trees, where only the songs of birds and the rustle of the wind resounded. Everything was enchantment and wonder, and the clangours of battles seemed only a sad memory in the woman's heart. In that bright greenery, young Perceval had grown wild and naive about everything.

One day he went out as usual to go hunting. However, after a few steps, among the thicket of trees, he saw three shining men riding fast. His astonishment was so great that in spite of his fright, he stared wide-eyed and open-mouthed at one of the horsemen, who got off his horse and approached him.



“Did you see five horsemen pass by with three maidens?”, he asked. The boy, who had never met a horseman before, without paying attention to the questions, asked in turn:

“What are you wearing on your arm, and what is that you are clutching in your fist? What strange glittering dress?”

The knight, struck by the boy’s ignorance, patiently explained:

“This is a shield with which I protect myself, this is a spear with which I fight, and the one I wear is an armour, which defends me from mortal blows! Have you seen the knights and the three maidens?” he asked, thinking he had satisfied Perceval’s curiosity.

“Interesting. And where did you get them? I want them too,” he said without answering or paying any attention to the knight’s request.

The patient knight said, “King Arthur gave them to me, he can make you a knight. Now tell me if you have seen the knights.”

“I want to go to the king to become a knight myself... Anyway I haven’t seen anyone, but I’m going to peasants, maybe they will be able to give you news.”

He added, immersed in his own thoughts and leaving the knights to talk to the peasants, he headed home one last time, to tell his mother that he was leaving.

The woman wept, pleaded to no avail, until she resigned and, full of sadness, gave him her last recommendations.



But Perceval, focused as he was on his desire to become a knight, rode away without having understood the lesson. As she watched him ride away from her, her heart crashed with grief and she barely whispered his name and fell to the ground like a tree whose roots had been removed. Perceval barely turned around, already far away, his thoughts caught by the thousand adventures that drew him as if they were the song of a siren.

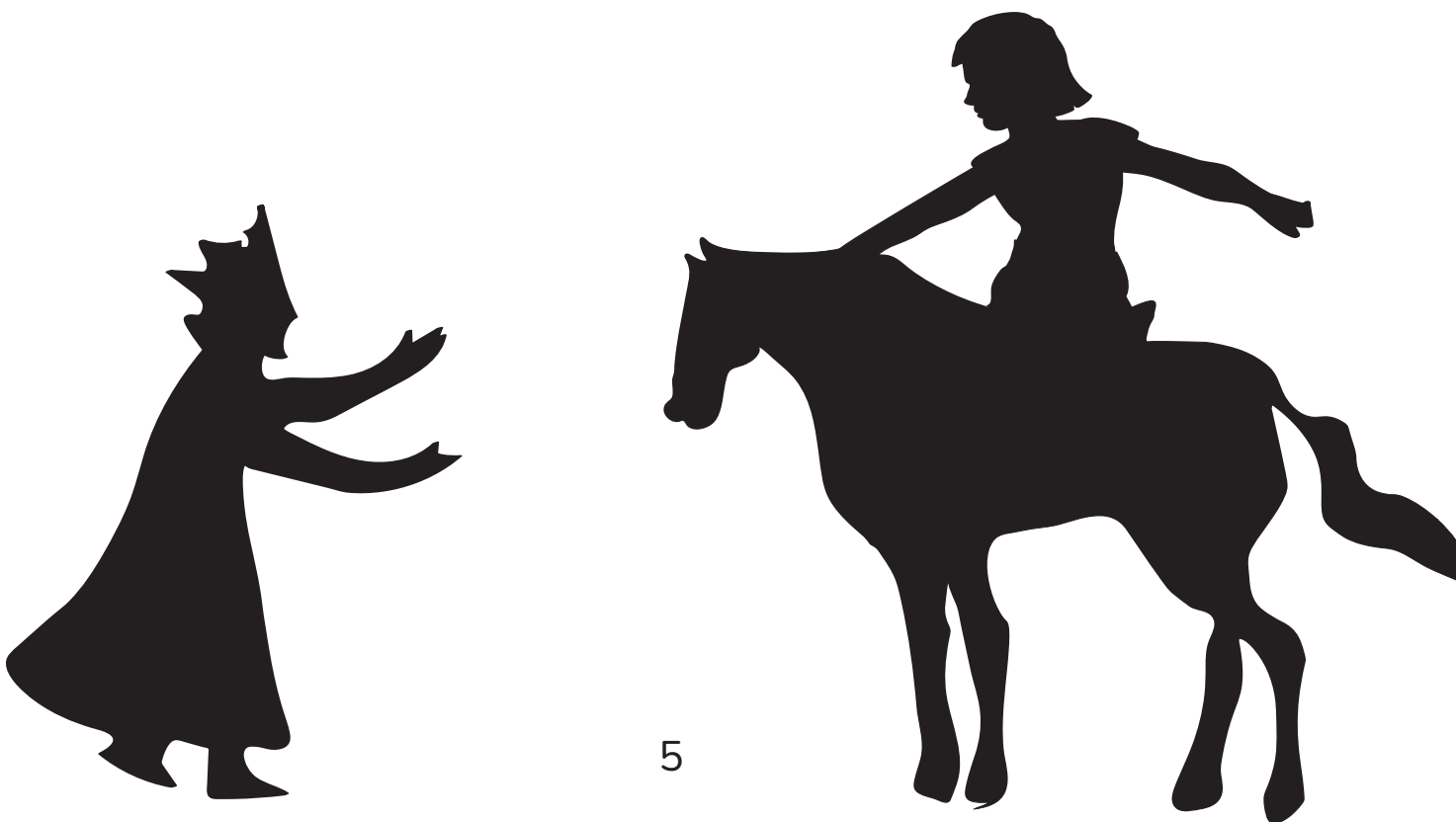
Riding through forests on his thin horse, he reached Carduel, on the seashore.

Surrounded by high, solid walls, stood King Arthur's castle.

Perceval was gazing in admiration when a magnificent vermilion-coloured knight drew his attention:

on his shining armour, weapons of a deep red colour stood out and in his hand he clutched a golden cup.

“Here are the weapons I want for myself!” he said to himself, and since he had never received any education and thought that a knight was such merely because of the mount, he rode forward to meet King Arthur on his horse!



King Arthur had just been upset by the vermilion knight who had poured a cup of wine on Queen Guinevere. He did not pay any attention to the young man who rode his horse into the hall, nor to the questions that, from a distant place, seemed to reach him overcoming his wall of anger. Every good king knows, however, that he has a duty to listen to his subjects, so he apologised to Perceval and tried to explain what had happened. Without dismounting from his horse and heedless of the king's feelings and tale, Perceval got straight to the point "I would like you to knight me". Arthur, in spite of his foiled behaviour, was struck by the boy's beauty and recognised in him a future knight, courageous and wise, and so replied "I will gladly do so for your courage and my honour."

"I, however, would like the vermilion weapons!" said Perceval resolutely.

Not far away, Keu, the king's blacksmith, a real brawler, always ready to stir up trouble and provoke, said:

"Of course, you just have to go and get them, they are yours!"

Perceval took this literally and turned his horse around, gave thanks and went out without the king being able to stop him or add anything else.

"Don't say things that are not true!" Said the king addressing Keu.

Perceval was spurring his horse and had almost left the castle when a maiden approached him and smilingly said

"Don't be afraid, one day you will be the best of knights."

Keu envious of such kindness, slapped her.

The boy saw the scene but his desire for the Vermilion knight's weapons was so intense that it dragged him out in search of them. A few steps later he found the knight in front of him.

“Leave your weapons at once, King Arthur commands you,” cried the naive youth, ordering the knight to undress and hand over his weapons to him.

The knight laughed loudly, holding his belly.

“Well then, you are here to challenge me,” he said as he raised his spear and struck the young man with it.

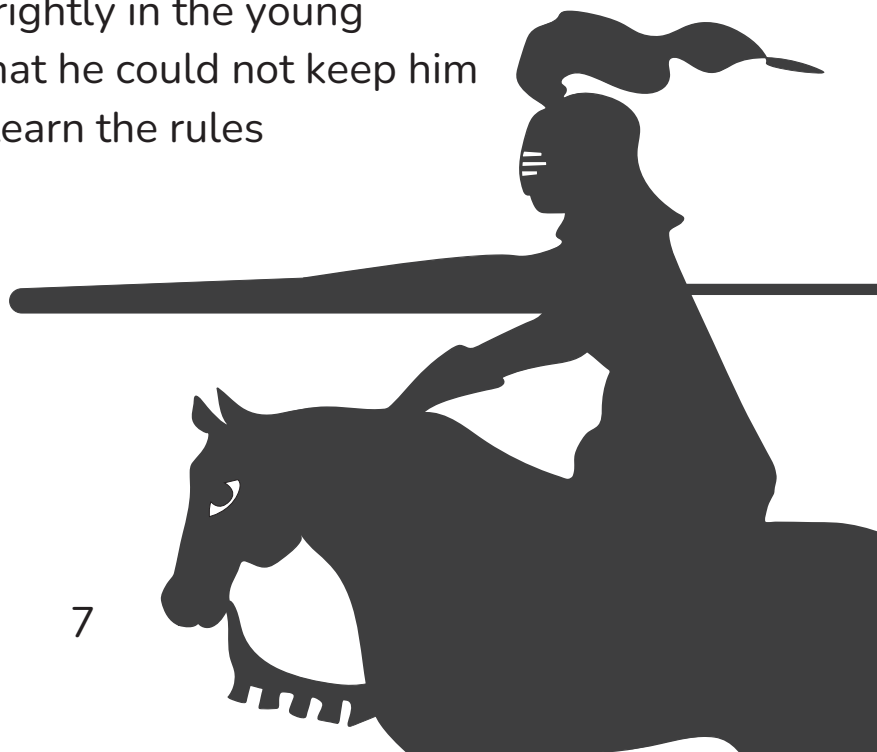
Perceval, who had no spears but only javelins and did not know the rules of knightly combat, hurled his javelin at his opponent, who fell to the ground dead, under the astonished eyes of lonet, who had followed Perceval from the castle. The young man approached, trying to remove his weapons clumsily, but no matter how hard he tried, the weapons remained firmly on the knight.

lonet, laughing, helped him and with quick and gentle gestures untied the weapons, making a gift of them to the young man, who, astonished, thanked him.

“You must tell the king,” said he, as he finished handing the weapons, “that I will return soon to avenge the sweet maiden from Keu’s offence.”

Then he mounted the knight Vermilion’s horse and set off.

lonet, still in disbelief at what had happened, returned to the castle and told all to King Arthur, who realised he had seen rightly in the young man’s talents, saddened that he could not keep him with him so that he could learn the rules of being a true knight.



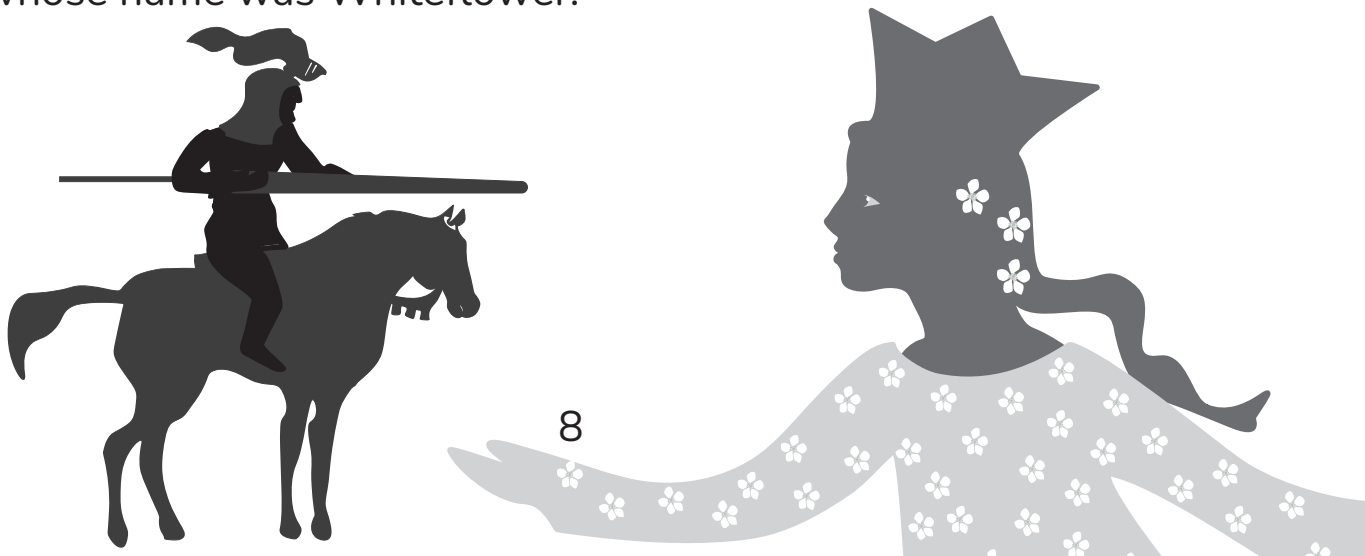
Good fortune was watching over Perceval as he came near another castle squeezed between a river and the sea.

The drawbridge was lowered and Perceval approached to cross it, when he saw coming out, wrapped in a long cloak, lord Gorneman of Gorhaut, who wanted to know his story and host him in the castle.

In the days and months that passed slowly, Perceval was able to learn all that the life he had spent in the Gaste Forest had kept him from. He learned to ride and use weapons and discovered that his host's advice was not too different from that of his mother. "You must have care, courage and passion and everything will come to you" Then he continued "If in battle you defeat a knight, let him live for that will give you honour, help the ladies and maidens if they need your help and try not to talk too much, lest your talk harm you." Perceval said goodbye to his master Lord Gorneman and resumed his journey until he reached another castle.

If Gorneman's was rich and welcoming this one seemed in ruins, and although it was called Goodshelter it could not offer much.

To greet him came a maiden, the most beautiful he had ever seen, with long blond hair and eyes so clear they seemed transparent. "I do not have much, my beautiful knight, but I will gladly accommodate you," said the girl, whose name was Whiteflower.



She was enchanting, even as she narrated the sad events that had made her castle a ruin.

“It was Anguingueron and Clamadeu, they killed my father and put the castle to the sword, I am sure they will attack me again!” Hearing those words Perceval offered to challenge them and in no time he was already on the battlefield against the first.

The battle was long and relentless, but Perceval won in the end. Drawing his sword, he was ready to strike his enemy, but the memory of the old master’s words stopped him: “I will not kill you,” he said, “but you must give yourself up to King Arthur”. The knight agreed.

Clamadeau, having heard of the defeat, wanted to besiege the castle again, thinking he would win the inhabitants by starvation. But that very night, a storm arose with such a strong wind that the waves pushed a ship loaded with provisions to the inlet on which the castle stood. Imagine the joy of the inhabitants and the anger of Clamadeau. “All that remains is to beat the young knight with the red weapons,” he said, thinking he could defeat him single-handedly. Perceval descended into the battlefield, lowered his helmet onto his face and slinged his spear.

Clamadeau was strong, but the boy was stronger.

Once again, after defeating him, he gave him the grace not to kill him.

“You will hand yourself over to King Arthur and free all the prisoners,” said the young man.



As Clamadeau was leaving towards Arthur's lands, Perceval returned to the castle of Whiteflower and with him all the prisoners also returned. These were happy days that were only interrupted by the news that Perceval wanted to leave the castle. "I must go back to my mother. When I left she was so distressed that she fell to the ground," he said almost as if he was realising only then what had happened. Promising to return soon, he said goodbye to Whiteflower and went into the forest.

He skirted the waters of the river in search of a ford or a bridge that would allow him to cross and thus reach home faster.

But the water flowed fast and deep, and even if the riverbed narrowed, he could not find a way through, as if it were a liquid wall blocking his passage.

When he reached a rock from which it was impossible to go any further, he saw a boat with two men in the middle of the river, the first one rowing and the second one fishing, attaching small fish to the hook.



“Please,” said the youth to the two men, “come here, I would like to cross the river but so far I have found no good spot to do so!” The fisherman replied, “I feel sorry for you but there is neither a bridge nor a way to cross.”

“Could you point me to a place to sleep then?”

“I will gladly accommodate you. Climb that ladder in the rock and continue straight on, you will find my house.”

Perceval followed the directions and found himself in front of a tower house, solid and square, with the bridge down.

As soon as he entered, he was met by servants who led him into a large hall where, seated in the middle,

stood the man from the boat wearing a cloak and sable hair.

Behind him a large fireplace lit up the room and the numerous diners with flames.

“I cannot get up,” said the Fisher King, wounded in battle and since invalided out. “Come closer and sit here with me.”

As the king spoke, a servant came with a sword.

“It is sent to you by your niece,” he said, handing it to the king.

“There are none like it,” said the king, showing the perfection of the blade.

“It is a gift for you,” he said again, as he handed it to Perceval.

Marveling at the beauty and grateful for the gift,

Perceval watched in amazement at the coming and going

of servants and the richly laid table, when suddenly

he saw a servant enter the room with a bloody sword.

He wanted to ask who it was, where he was going,

what the sword was, but remembering his master’s words,

he decided to keep silent.

The comings and goings of the mysterious procession continued, as did the passage of extraordinary objects, a servant with a spear from which a drop of blood descended, or a maiden holding the precious Grail, so beautiful and shining that it lit up the room at every step, as if she were carrying not a plate adorned with precious stones but the sun itself.

Astonished Perceval was torn between curiosity and shyness and perhaps for this reason remained silent and astonished as he watched the maiden leave the room.

The dishes continued to come in and each dish was anticipated by the entrance of a maiden with the Grail.

“I wonder who they serve it to?” he wondered but only thought so, the question never escaped his lips.

“I will ask the servants tomorrow,” he said as soon as dinner was over and everyone went to sleep. In the morning, however, there was no one to ask, everyone had disappeared.

The young man wandered through the empty rooms for a while, then certain that he was alone, he mounted his horse and galloped out.



As soon as he left the castle he saw the bridge rise and close behind him.

Unaware that he had missed an opportunity offered to few, the young man spurred his horse and rode into the forest, but a few steps further on he heard a piercing and desperate cry.

Under a large oak tree a maiden was weeping, in whose arms she held a dead young knight.

Merciless Perceval asked what had happened.

The maiden looked at the knight through her tears and recognised her cousin in him.

“My cousin, from where did you come so fresh and rested?” she asked. “I have been a guest of King Fisher, I have eaten and slept in his castle, but this morning all had disappeared.”

The maiden, looking at him astonished, asked,

“During dinner did you see a bloody spear and perhaps the holy Grail pass by?”

“Of course, I saw the spear and the Grail resplendent and full of precious gems being carried back and forth...”

“And did you ask who was being served?”

“Of course not, my master told me not to ask questions...”

“What a terrible mistake, if only you had asked, the king would have been safe, he would have been healed but now everything is lost... You know nothing, not even of your mother’s death, when you saw her fall, you did not care.” said the girl again.

Perceval fell silent as if tears instead of filling his eyes had drowned all his words.

Perceval grieved and walked away, leaving the maiden to weep for a friend in her arms.

From duel to duel and battle to battle, Perceval continued his peregrine by fighting and winning. To all the defeated knights, he always asked the same thing, to go and give themselves up to King Arthur.

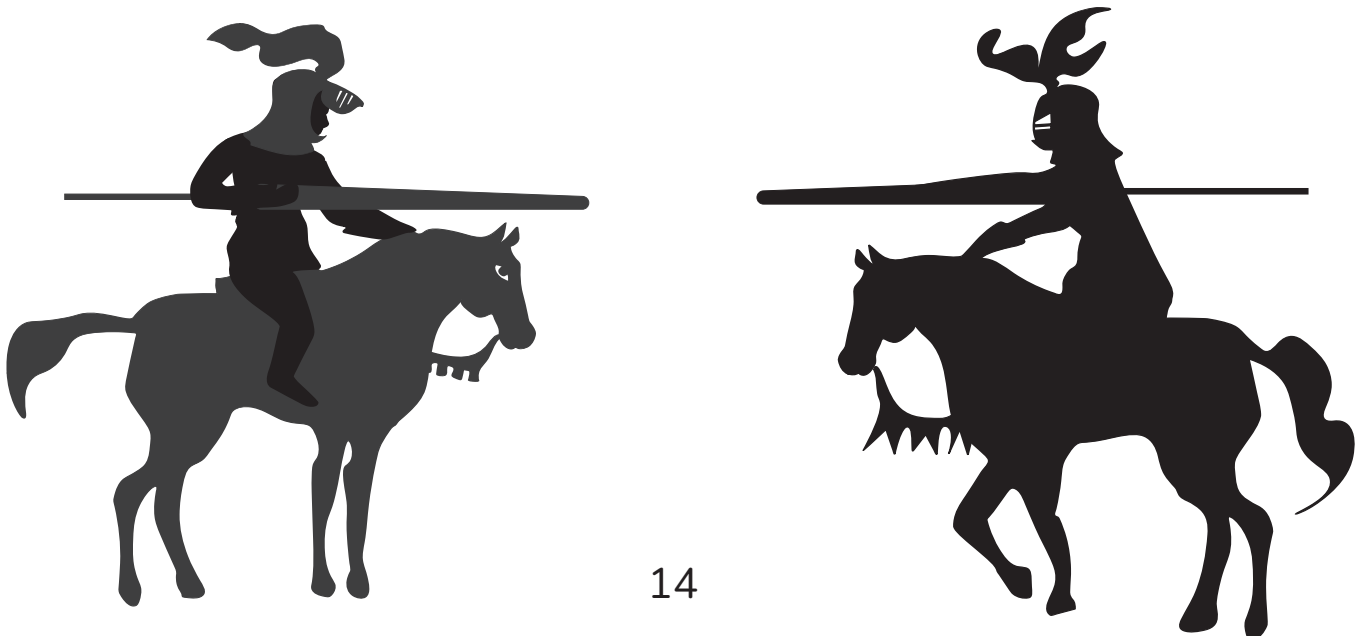
One after the other, the knights came to King Arthur's court, telling of their defeat and of their promise to punish Keu for his offence against the girl. Hearing those stories, regret grew in the king's heart for not having held him that day, but with it grew the knowledge that he was the great knight he had imagined.

"We will go and find him!" said the king and immediately ordered the entire court to set out on Perceval's trail.

A long caravan thus arrived in a wide snowy valley.

Keu, who wanted revenge for the young knight's repeated challenges, told the king that he was going to pick up Perceval who was sitting in the snow. Armed to the teeth, with spear already forked, he started railing and shouting as soon as he saw him from a distance.

Hearing himself challenged so fiercely, Perceval jumped on his horse and, taking up his spear, threw himself at the knight, unhorsing him and breaking his arm, thus avenging the insult done to the smiling maiden.



The king, informed of the incident, was worried about Keu, but discovering that he was out of danger, asked Gawain to go and call the young knight who, after the battle, had once again sat down to contemplate the snowy landscape.

With kind words, Gawain addressed the young man who, hearing that the king who had made him a knight was looking for him, dropped his weapons and followed the messenger to the king's tent. He was greeted by dances and the most exquisite food, the queen's smile and Keu's anger that could not dim the joy of all.

Suddenly riding a mule, an ugly maiden with thick frizzy hair that fell over her narrow, close-set eyes, a stubbly beard like a goat's and teeth as yellow as eggshells greeted the king and his court as she entered the hall. Then she pointed her hooked finger at Perceval and grinning angrily said:

"You have refused the fortune that was bestowed upon you. You rejected beauty as if it had not been enough.

Was splendour not enough for you? A question would have sufficed but you missed your moment. Far from here, there is a castle where a princess is being held prisoner.

Two nights are necessary for you to free her."

The hideous maiden came out as she had come, and Gawain and other knights came forward to set out in search of the castle, all except Perceval whose only interest now was to find the Grail and all the extraordinary objects of that magical night.



For five years he devoted himself to battles and duels and the search for the Grail.

Nothing else existed, until one day, tired of the many battles, he stopped and heard about a wise old man who wanted to meet him.

The old man had a long white beard that descended on his chest and asked the young man to tell him about his life. But the first to come out of Perceval were not words but tears. “What is your name?” the man asked, “Perceval” he replied.

The man sighed and in a gentle voice said.

“My dear nephew, the greatest and gravest mistake you have made is towards your mother who was my sister.”

Perceval looked at the surprised man and almost held his breath as he thought back with sorrow to that day so many years before when he had left home, the loving and protective nest his mother had built for him in the depths of the Gaste Forest.

“To have failed towards his love, to have had no pity for the pain of seeing you leave, that is why you could not ask, that is why you could not ask questions, your first grave mistake made you wrong again... you did not ask about the spear and you did not ask about the holy grail, which was being served to the father of the Fisher King. But now that you have understood your mistake, all is forgiven.”



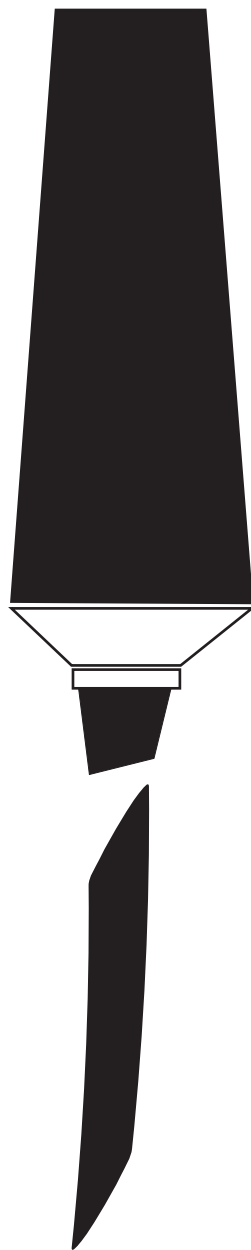
ACTIVITIES

The tools we draw with are important.

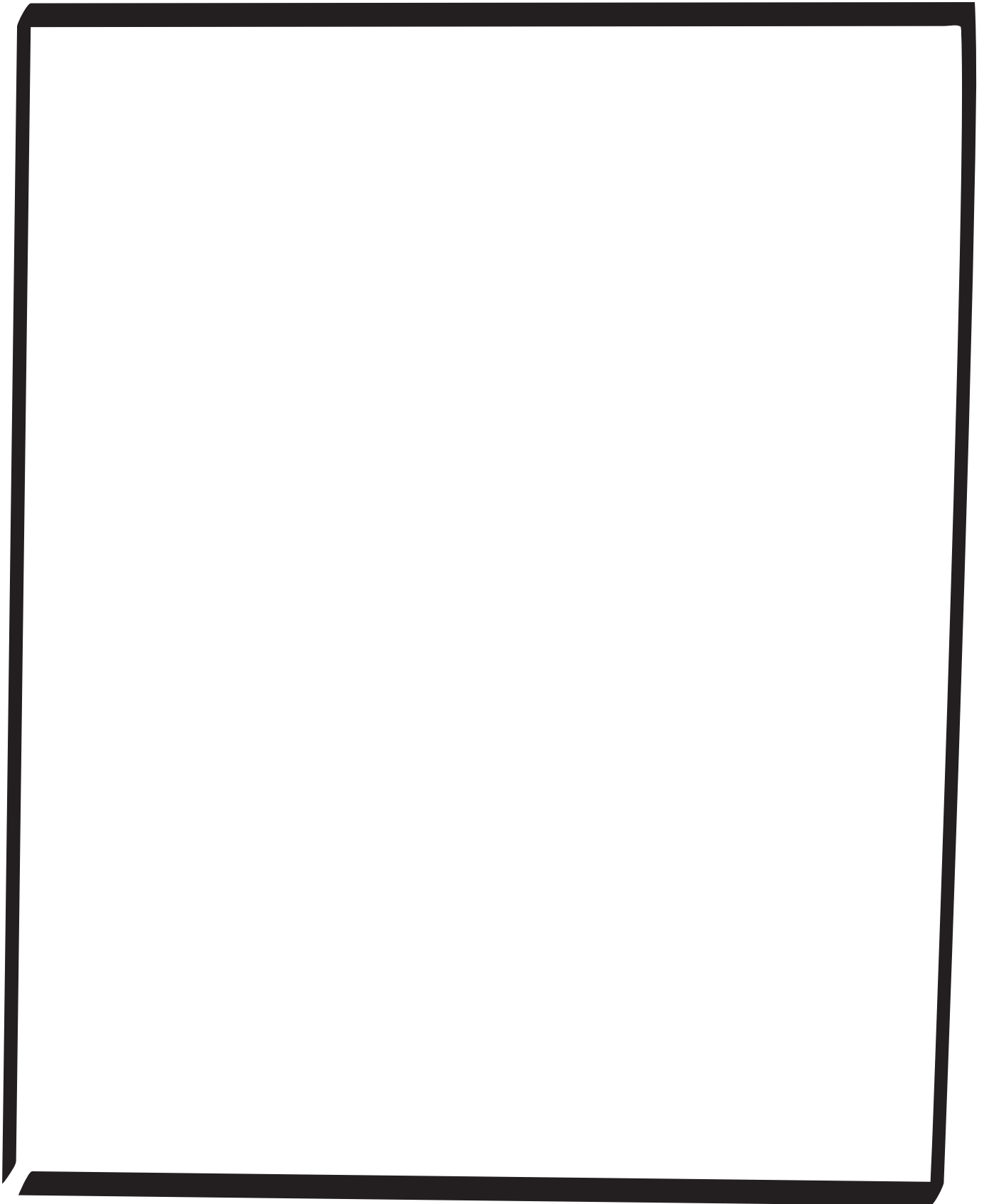
Get markers with different tips:

flat, round, brush. Also get some brushes and tempera paints.

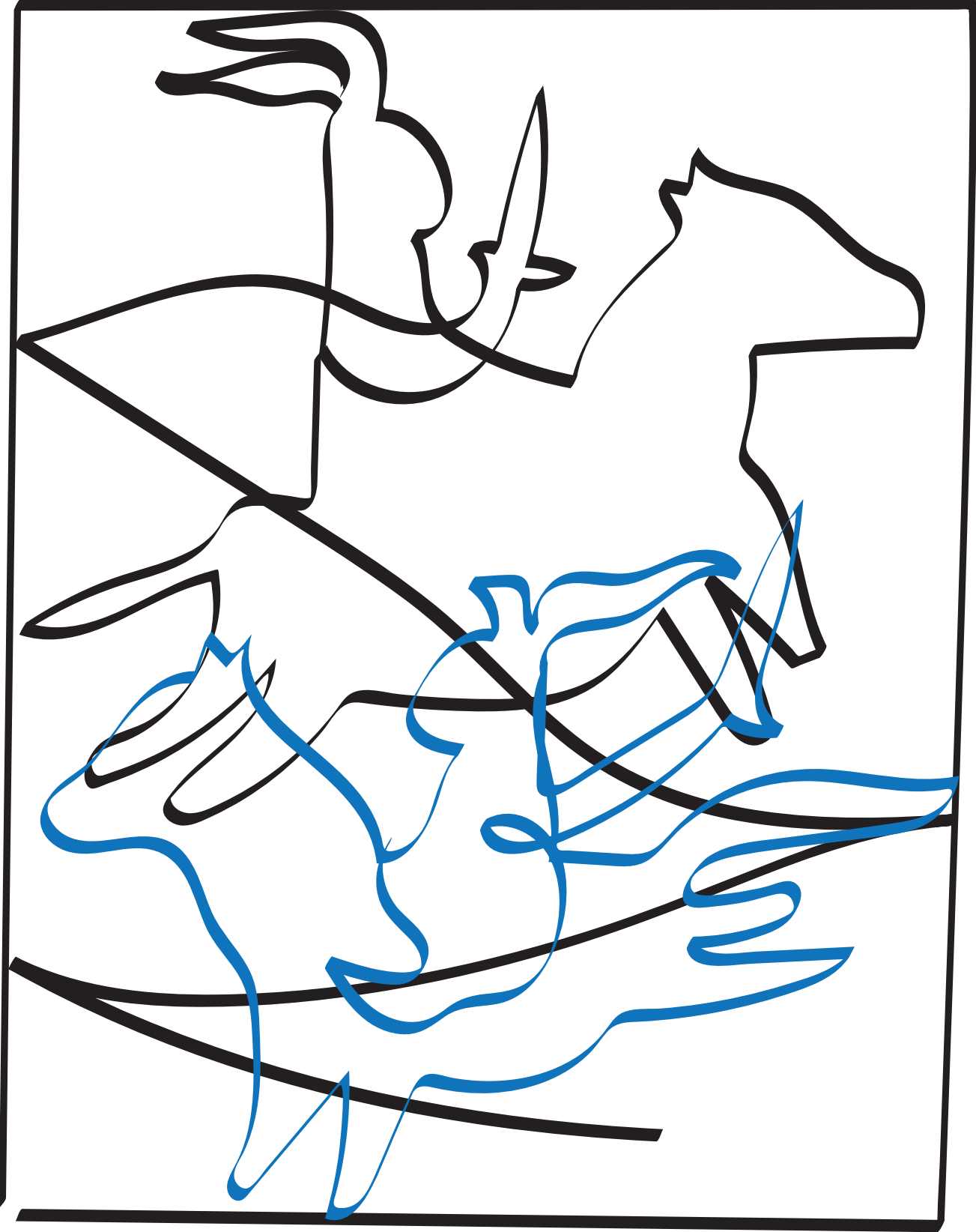
You can choose black or any other colour you like.



In your sketchbook draw a frame so that it takes up the entire sheet.
The frame will help you better frame the drawing.



Draw some characters without removing your hand from the paper.
If you want, alternate between two colors.



Choose your favorite drawing and colour some of the figures.
Draw and write in the blanks, using capital letters.



Draw on your album without ever removing your hand from the paper.

Colour by alternating colours as in a checkerboard.



Choose one of the drawings you like the most.

Write in cursive the key word or title of the story in the white and coloured spaces.



Draw the usual frame on your sketchbook.
Divide it into three or more parts with wiggly lines.
Using two different colours, write in cursive the title
or keyword, without removing your hand.
Overlap the two writings.





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