

"I found it stuck in a stone, outside a church."
 Sir Kay had been watching the tilting nervously, waiting for his turn. He had not paid much attention to his squire.
 "That is a funny place to find one," he said.
 "Yes, it was stuck through an anvil."
 "What?" cried Sir Kay, suddenly rounding upon him. "Did you just say this sword was stuck in a stone?"
 "It was," said the Wart. "It was a sort of war memorial."
 Sir Kay stared at him for several seconds in amazement, opened his mouth, shut it again, licked his lips, then turned his back and plunged through the crowd. He was looking for Sir Ector, and the Wart followed after him.
 "Father," cried Sir Kay, "come here a moment."
 "Yes, my boy," said Sir Ector. "Splendid! falls these professional chaps do manage. Why, what's the matter, Kay? You look as white as a sheet."
 "Do you remember that sword which the King of England would pull out?"
 "Yes."
 "Well, here it is. I have it. It is in my hand. I pulled it out."
 Sir Ector did not say anything silly. He looked at Kay and he looked at the Wart. Then he stared at Kay again, long and lovingly, and said, "We will go back to the church."
 "Now then, Kay," he said, when they were at the church door. He looked at his firstborn kindly, but straight between the eyes. "Here is the stone, and you have the sword. It will make you the King of England. You are my son that I am proud of, and always will be, whatever you do. Will you promise me that you took it out by your own might?"
 Kay looked at his father. He also looked at the Wart and at the sword. Then he handed the sword to the Wart quite quietly.
 He said, "I am a liar. Wart pulled it out."
 As far as the Wart was concerned, there was a time after this in which Sir Ector kept telling him to put the sword back into the stone—which he did—and in which Sir Ector and Kay then vainly tried to take it out. The Wart took it out for them, and stuck it back again once or twice. After this, there was another time which was more painful.
 He saw that his dear guardian was looking quite old and powerless, and that he was kneeling down with difficulty on a gouty²⁴ knee. "Sir," said Sir Ector, without looking up, although he was speaking to his own boy.
 "Please do not do this, father," said the Wart, kneeling down also. "Let me help you up, Sir Ector, because you are making me unhappy."
 "Nay, nay, my lord," said Sir Ector, with some very feeble old tears.

24. *gouty* (gout' e) *adj.* having gout, a disease causing swelling and severe pain in the joints.

Reading Strategy

Recognizing Author's Attitude How do Sir Ector's comments to Sir Kay suit the tone of this selection?

Reading Check

What does Sir Kay tell his father about the sword?