

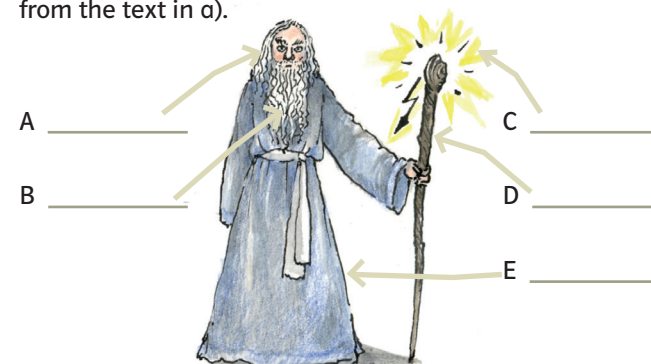
## Before you read the story

### Merlin

a) Read about Merlin.

The story in this reader is about Merlin when he was a young boy. Merlin was a **wizard** in Britain, maybe the most famous wizard of all time! We don't know if he was real or fantasy but we learn about him in legends like King Arthur and Lancelot. In such stories Merlin has great wisdom and special powers: He can see the future and do magic. Films and books often show Merlin with a **long beard** and **long hair**. He carries a **staff** – a long stick that may have **magical powers**. In some stories he can talk with dragons.

b) Look at the picture. Match the letters with the words from the text in a).



c) Which other stories or films do you know with wizards in them? Make a list in class.

d) Which is your class's favourite wizard? Take a vote on it.

**wizard** ['wɪzəd] Zauberer • **wisdom** ['wɪzdəm] Weisheit • **power** ['paʊə] Kraft • **to do magic** ['mædʒɪk] zaubern • **beard** [biəd] Bart • **magical powers** ['mædʒɪkl 'paʊəz] magische Kräfte • **dragon** ['drægn] Drache

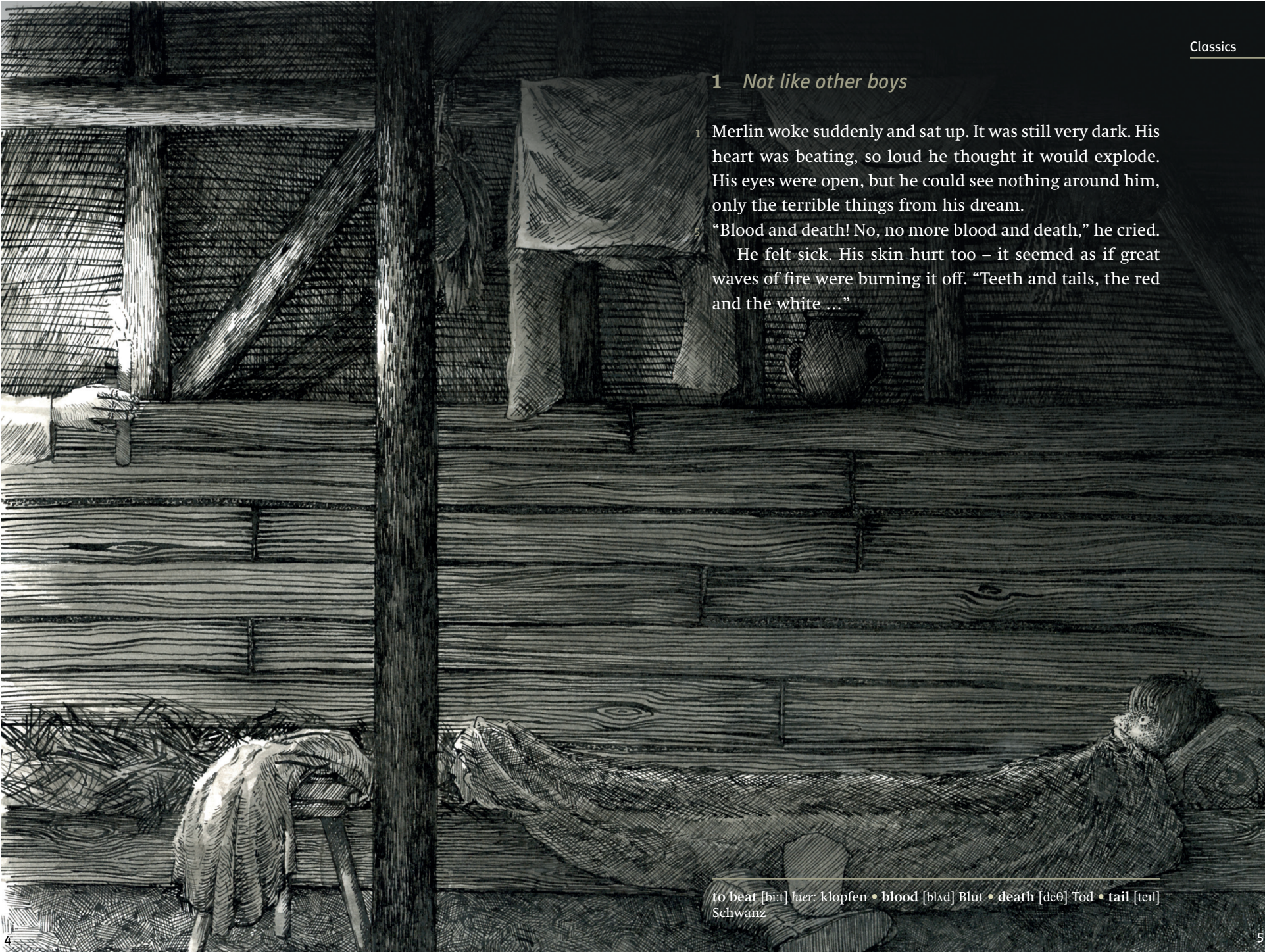
## Contents

Before you read the story \_\_\_ 3

- 1 Not like other boys \_\_\_ 5
- 2 Meeting the King \_\_\_ 9
- 3 Blood on the stones \_\_\_ 13
- 4 The Cave of Wisdom \_\_\_ 17
- 5 A brand new beginning \_\_\_ 21

Exercises \_\_\_ 25





## 1 Not like other boys

1 Merlin woke suddenly and sat up. It was still very dark. His heart was beating, so loud he thought it would explode. His eyes were open, but he could see nothing around him, only the terrible things from his dream.

5 “Blood and death! No, no more blood and death,” he cried.

He felt sick. His skin hurt too – it seemed as if great waves of fire were burning it off. “Teeth and tails, the red and the white ...”

to beat [bi:t] hier: klopfen • blood [blʌd] Blut • death [deθ] Tod • tail [teɪl] Schwanz



1 Suddenly he saw a flame in the dark around him.  
What could it be? He looked up – the flame was only a  
candle. And it was his mother who'd brought it. He was in  
the hut he and his mother lived in.

5 She came over and sat next to him on his bed, with the  
candle in her hand.

"Everything's all right now," she said.

She touched his face with her hand.

"You're so hot! Was it the same old nightmare?"

10 "I ... I think so," said Merlin as his heart slowed down.  
His mother's hand felt cool on his face, and he saw her  
smile in the candle-light.

"Oh, well, it's finished now," she said. "It's sad you can  
never remember any of your nightmares. Maybe if you  
15 told me what it's about, you wouldn't have it so often ...  
And maybe it would make it a bit less scary too."

Merlin had had the same nightmare many times since  
he was small. But now it came much more often, and left  
him more upset. So he was glad he couldn't remember  
20 very much of it when he woke up.

"Don't worry, Mother," he said. "You can go back to  
bed now. I'll be fine."

"If you're sure ..." she said, and looked into his eyes  
for a moment. "You know, you're very special, Merlin.  
25 Now sleep well and don't have any more dreams."



Merlin fell asleep again at last, but it took a long time.  
That word *special* kept appearing in his head. It was still  
there when he woke up in the morning, and it stayed  
stuck in his head while he ate his watery porridge.

hut [hʌt] Hütte • nightmare ['naɪtmɛə] Albtraum

1 His mother was upset to see her son's unhappy face.  
She asked him to buy a bucket of milk.

It was a wet, cloudy day in October, and Merlin walked  
slowly through the village, feeling worried. He lived with  
5 his mother in the far west of Britain. The country around  
the village was full of steep mountains and dark valleys.  
They were poor, like all the people in the village, but his  
mother often told him he was special.

He had no father, but there were lots of children like  
10 him whose fathers were dead or were away fighting.

These were difficult, dangerous times in Britain. Bands  
of Saxon warriors rode across the land, stealing and  
murdering, and many Britons were killed in battles with  
them.

15 But Merlin never had a father. That's what Merlin's  
mother always said when he asked. Her own family were  
rich and important. Nobody in her family believed her  
when she said her baby had no father. She couldn't tell  
them anything more, so they threw her out and sent her  
20 to live far away.

Everyone in the village knew the story of Merlin and  
his mother. Merlin hated the way people pointed at her  
and laughed. They made jokes about her too.

But he hated the way they thought of him even more.  
25 The village grown-ups were always horrible to him. They  
talked to each other about him when they thought he  
couldn't hear them. And the children were even more  
horrible – they called him "silly kid" or "idiot" and never  
played with him.

30 Merlin was nearly at the village now. He stopped at  
the farm where he got the milk. There was a full barrel  
of milk by the door and a big wooden spoon. He spooned

valley ['væli] Tal • warrior ['wɔːriə] Krieger, Kriegerin • to steal [sti:l]  
stehlen • Briton ['brɪtn] Brite, Britin

1 milk into his bucket as the cows mooed at him from the warm darkness of the shed. He left a coin in payment.

The farmer and his wife gave him unfriendly looks from the door of their cottage.

5 “Go on, go away,” the farmer said. He held out his hand with the fingers in the shape of a devil’s horns. This was to protect himself and his wife from the *Evil Eye* – the villagers always did this when they saw Merlin.

Something about him made them feel very nervous.

10 Merlin left the farm again with the bucket of milk. If only he was normal! He often thought he’d give a lot to be like the rest of the boys in the village. But deep inside he felt his mother was right. He knew he was different in some way. The dream told him that even if he never  
15 remembered what happened in it. There were other things as well – strange, scary things he thought about that he kept secret from his mother.

He pushed down the bad thoughts and walked on slowly. Maybe he could change and then people would  
20 like him more. Maybe if he was really nice to them, they would be a bit nicer to him ...

Just then, Merlin heard the sound of horses. He looked up and saw a small band of warriors on horse-back galloping into the village. As they came closer, Merlin saw  
25 where they wanted to go. Suddenly his blood froze – they were on their way to his hut! He let the bucket fall with a loud dang, and all the milk spilt onto the muddy ground.

But Merlin didn’t care.

He started to run as fast as he  
30 could, calling out to his mother ...



devil’s horns [ˌdevlɪz ˈhɔːnz] Teufelshörner • evil [ˈiːvl] böse • to spill [spɪl] verschütten

## 2 Meeting the King

1 The warriors stopped in front of the hut but they didn’t climb down from their horses. Merlin saw his mother come out and one of the riders said something to her. She shook her head, and seemed a bit confused but she  
5 didn’t look very worried.

“Is this the boy?” said the man as Merlin ran up and stood next to his mother. She took her hand in his. The man stared down at Merlin with cold, hard eyes.

Merlin watched the warriors on their tall horses. There  
10 were ten of them and each wore armour and a helmet with a red crest. All of them had long, shiny spears and big swords.

“Yes, this is my son,” said Merlin’s mother and pulled him close to her. “But I’m afraid you’ll have to tell me  
15 again. Er ... what exactly do you want with him?”

“It’s not me who wants him,” the man answered in an angry voice. “We are the body-guards of Great King Vortigern, who is ruler of Britain. We’re here to find the boy and bring him back to the King’s fortress.”

20 “But why?” said Merlin’s mother. “It’s not every day that the King summons a boy from a poor village. Even though I know Merlin is special ...”

“Mother!” Merlin said through his teeth. His face began to go red. All ten warriors stared at him now, looking  
25 straight into his face. “I wish you wouldn’t say that!”

“The King wants the boy – and he has his reasons,” said the man impatiently and his horse made a noise as if it agreed. “No more talking now,” he added. “We have a long, hard ride in front of us.”

30 “Well, I can’t understand it,” said Merlin’s mother.

to shake your head [ˌ,jeɪk ʃəː ˈhed] den Kopf schütteln • crest [krest] Wappen • spear [spiə] Speer • ruler [ˈruːlə] Herrscher, Herrscherin • fortress [ˈfɔːtrəs] Festung • to summon [ˈsʌmən] jdn. zu sich bestellen