



I Am Mordred

Nancy Springer

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Mordred only wants his father's love, but Camelot believes Merlin's prophecy, Arthur's killer. The doomed narrator, forever dressed in black, fights his destiny. Only lovely Nyneve believes the lad can be good, traps manipulator Merlin, gives boy white pup Gull, takes them to his mother's castle.

I Am Mordred Details

Date : Published January 14th 2002 by Penguin Putnam Firebird (first published April 13th 1998)

ISBN : 9780698118416

Author : Nancy Springer

Format : Paperback 184 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Mythology, Arthurian, Young Adult, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction

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From Reader Review I Am Mordred for online ebook

Pop Bop says

Tragic, Touching, and Tormented

Chroniclers from the Middle Ages, spare though the references are, generally treated Mordred with high regard as an honorable man. At worst he was viewed as a victim of fate and circumstance. Starting with "Le Morte d'Arthur" in 1485 and continuing more or less to the present day, Mordred was reduced to a black hearted villain, (or sometimes an angsty and petulant youth), and his name became synonymous with treason, if not patricide. It thus seems fitting that Nancy Springer has written an account of Mordred's life that reaches back to his earliest status and recasts him as a victim of circumstance, fate, and intrigue beyond his control. The further back you go in Arthur cycle scholarship the more conflicted and imperfect all of the main characters become, and it seems only fair that Mordred be allowed to plead his case.

That said, this is not a book of dry scholarship or academic argument. It is Mordred's tale, and I imagine should be judged as such. In that regard it is, to me, a fine tale. We start with the babe Mordred, set adrift by Arthur on the ocean to perish for the simple sin of being born, and for being foreseen by Merlin as Arthur's fated assassin. It was not unusual at the time for kings to have children by their sisters, so the fact that Mordred was the result of the union of Arthur and his half-sister, (at least in this telling; scholars differ), was less important than Merlin's foretelling. Since Merlin was considered either a genius wizard or a bumbling and pathetic charlatan or a devious plotter, (depending on who you read and the need of the moment), Mordred's tragic backstory as collateral damage from Merlin's scheming comes into clearer focus.

Springer brings Mordred to life in a sympathetic and remarkably engaging fashion. Torn from pillar to post, kept in the dark about his background and about the prophecies that marked him, the Mordred in this book is a kind and honorable young man with spine and wit. How he is turned and twisted and ultimately destroyed by fate and Arthur's indifference and distance makes for a thrilling tale. It is perhaps not by accident that the two most tragic figures in Arthur lore are Arthur himself and his son Mordred. In the final pages of this book their tragic relationship is brought to a head with high drama and grace.

Arthur lore and revisions aside, since all of these stories are tales of wonder, and can be woven, picked apart, and rewoven at will, I guess the main question is how has Springer done with all of this familiar material? I for one very much enjoyed and appreciated her portrayal of Mordred, and found new sympathy for his place in the Arthur canon. And, in any event, simply as a ripping tale of towering figures drawn from a lost era, this was a well written, tightly structured, fast paced, often touching, and always interesting story for anyone with a taste for Arthur tales.

Kat Hooper says

Originally posted at FanLit.

<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

3.5 stars

Almost all the modern stories derived from Arthurian legends focus on King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, Sir Lancelot, Sir Gawain, and Merlin. Why does Mordred, the man who eventually brings down the whole shebang, get such short shrift? There's plenty of source material, most notably Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Maybe it's that Mordred isn't very romantic. Or maybe we just don't like reading about people who are hard to root for.

In her novel *I Am Mordred*, Nancy Springer flips the legend, brings the traitorous Mordred to tragic life, and makes him easy to sympathize with. When we meet Mordred he's a happy child being raised in a loving home by hard-working fisherfolk. His life changes when he's discovered and taken away. Now he lives with a cold mother, a heavy burden (Merlin has publicly prophesied that Mordred will kill King Arthur) and a huge helping of guilt (King Arthur killed all the babies in the realm when he found out about Mordred's birth).

But Mordred doesn't want to kill anybody. He's a sensitive child who just wants to be loved and accepted by his scheming mother and the kind father who refuses to acknowledge him as son. Can Mordred find love? Can he defy his fate, or is he destined to fulfill it?

I Am Mordred is a short sad novel with a sympathetic anti-hero. Nancy Springer's prose is pretty and she brings a little piece of Arthurian Legend to life as Mordred gives his candid impressions of Arthur, Morgause, Morgan Le Fay, and others. In addition Springer explores such subjects as the nature of family, love, loneliness, original sin, self-determinism, fate and free will, honor, shame and guilt, and the function of the soul.

I Am Mordred is marketed to children aged 10 and up. As far as children's literature goes, the tale is rather somber and dark, dealing with incest, adultery, murder, and death, but it's tastefully done and none of it is graphic or glorifying. Nancy Springer succeeds in illustrating the lesson that we should always try to look at events from other people's perspectives. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend *I Am Mordred* to children, but keep in mind that it's dark and sad. Springer doesn't change the legendary ending.

I listened to Steven Crossley narrate Recorded Book's version of *I Am Mordred*. I enjoyed this production.

Harold Smithson (Suicide punishable by Death) says

A surprisingly complex book.

Mordred, for those of you who aren't aware, is a figure from Arthurian legend. The illegitimate son of King Arthur was demonized in the original text due to his birth. Here, his side of the story is told. And it's not as simple as misunderstood softie. Instead, it's a study into the idea of fate and self-fulfilling prophecy.

Mordred has been marked as the man who will kill King Arthur since his birth, which caused the king to cast all the babies of his kingdom out into the sea. Having survived this ordeal and arriving at a fishing village in which his childhood is spent, Mordred is then picked up by a woman named Nyneve, who becomes his closest friend, and the one who is determined to see to it Mordred does not kill Arthur.

I Am Mordred's main theme is fatalism versus our ability to decide. King Arthur comes off as a very nice man who has made poor decisions in his past. Indeed, aside from Nyneve, Arthur is the person nicest to Mordred. But he seems resigned to the notion of Mordred as his executioner. The question that *I Am*

Mordred asks is: does fate alone produce these kinds of tragedies, or does faith in fate cause them? Once Mordred succumbs to the idea of fate, he becomes more brazen, unwillingly and regretfully yet constantly moving towards what he perceives as his destiny. But what truly causes this? What is fated to happen is not known, but is fate simply a perception? Anything can be claimed to be "fated to happen". What is the answer? That question and its answer (Or lack thereof) is what made *I Am Mordred* a highly memorable read and one of my favorite stories from 2012. It's truly a shame that it's so underrated.

If there is one mistake that this book makes, it's in the ending. The epilogue answers questions that were, in my opinion, more interesting to ponder and think about on our own. Though I concede that the bird was a clever plot point, I think that the ending simply lacks the ambiguity that made the rest of the story so good, and is a low point in a story that is otherwise well-written, well-thought-out, and surprisingly complex. Mordred is one of my favorite YA characters, the world is well-built, and the themes truly are a joy to read. This book is truly worth a read.

PurplyCookie says

One of the most enigmatic and mysterious characters of Arthurian legend is Arthur's illegitimate son, Mordred. Unfortunately, he is also one of the least explored. In a market flooded with preachy, badly-written Arthuriana, **"I Am Mordred"** shines like a rare, dark gem.

The book opens with King Arthur sadly setting dozens of newborn babies adrift on the ocean. Several years later, we see a young boy living peacefully with a fisherman and his wife. Their happy lives are interrupted when a woman named Nyneve rides in to bring Mordred back to his biological family, the royal family of Lothian. However, they are not pleased to see him.

He soon finds out why: he is the product of incest between King Arthur and his half-sister Morgause, and is destined to kill his father someday. Shocked by this, Mordred goes to Camelot and soon begins craving his father's love and acceptance. He is also terrified of the prophecy that he will kill Arthur, and does everything he can to fight it. But can he fight his destiny, or only fulfil it?

One of the primary themes is whether a person is "born bad"; Mordred has, in his lifetime, done nothing wrong. Yet he is treated as a pariah by the people around him. His loneliness is broken only by Arthur and by Mordred's dog, Gull. While traditional Arthurian legends seem to be based around the idea of Mordred being evil because of his incestuous conception, Springer simply breaks those ideas apart. Nobody is simply born to be evil. Destiny and fate are some of the items that are also explored: Mordred seeks a way to avoid fulfilling the prophecy, but risks fulfilling it through avoidance.

King Arthur is a good supporting character, surprisingly complex. Springer portrays him as an essentially good man who committed a terrible crime in an effort to save himself and his kingdom, and who regrets it. He wants to love Mordred as Mordred wants to be loved, but is as afraid of the prophecy as Mordred is.

Like **"I am Morgan Le Fay"**, this book is more of a psychological work that raises new questions to previous assumptions. I definitely recommend this book to all fans of Camelot.

More of Purplycookie's Reviews @: <http://www.goodreads.com/purplycookie>

Book Details:

Title I Am Mordred: A Tale from Camelot

Author Nancy Springer

Reviewed By Purplycookie

Jessica says

This book was a successful journey into one of my favorite book subjects: taking a famous story and looking at it from an evil character or foe who might more or less be misunderstood. Short and sweet, but a little more bittersweet in where it is destined to go. Definitely worth a read.

Kristina says

The interest in reading this sprung mainly from my current Merlin kick. In all honesty, I was shocked at how much I enjoyed it. I figured that it would play out as more of a children's book that wouldn't hardly scratch the surface of the pain and conflict that Mordred felt. Boy, was I ever wrong. *I Am Mordred* was a beautifully told story about a very conflicted and struggling boy. The characters were realistic as well as the dialogue and setting.

Mordred's life has always been one full of pity and tragedy. When he was just a baby his father King Arthur tried to kill him. Without his knowing, he survived and was found by a fisherman who took him home. After so many years, Mordred finds himself being taken away from his adoptive family and being placed in another home, but this time with the nobility. Taunted and sometimes just ignored, Mordred grows up here knowing that his father is King Arthur. He also learns that it was foretold that he would be the one to kill his father in the future, and thus becomes so conflicted and worrisome that he yearns for more answers. At fifteen, he is sent to Camelot with his older adoptive brothers to become a part of Arthur's kingdom. It is here with his father that he hopes to find the answers that he's been looking for his entire life.

The writing was really wonderful. Nancy Springer did a fabulous job in detailing Mordred's inner struggles from child to young adult. We really got a feel as to what was swirling around in his head, and doing so made me feel so much for him. Also, she set the scene in such a realistic way that it was almost like watching a reenactment on the History channel. It was all done so beautifully as well, it was all just so very very good.

Pacing-wise, I had no problems with this book. The transitions are smooth and not rushed at all.

The characters were also written and developed in a nice way. We get to see Mordred's transformation in a smooth way, and how much more conflicted he becomes within himself. His thoughts and feelings are obvious and present and portrayed in a realistic manner. By the end of the book I just really wanted to give the boy a hug.

We also got small backstories on Nyneve, who was a vital person in Mordred's growth and Morgan Le Faye. Truly, they were all done so very well that I don't have many complaints. Their dialogue was well done and fit the time and their actions just the same.

Overall, *I Am Mordred* was a nice and beautiful story of a boy coming to terms with who he is and will be. The writing as well as characters were spot on and truly fit the era of time. Nearly everything about this book was beautiful. If you're into Arthurian legend or anything of the sort then I do recommend that you pick up this book and let it move you as it did me.

5/5

Recommend?: If you're into Arthurian legend and are curious.

If you want to read a nice story about a magical boy who finally finds himself.

Brooke says

Fantastic! I loved that she had him start out as just an innocent child, growing into a man struggling with his own conscience and how he doesn't want to do what everyone is scared he was prophesied to do. The author really made me feel for him, and I wanted so badly for it to somehow work out, no matter that I know how the Arthurian legend goes. Despite that, it actually ended differently than I thought it would, so that was great, too. I can't wait to read *I am Morgan le Fay*!

Kara says

So, Mordred is born and Merlin declares, 'he's evil and he's going to kill the king.'

Mordred spends the next 200 pages saying: 'I'm not evil and I'm not going to kill the king.'

He says this over and over to himself, the reader, other characters, all while drifting through life at Camelot as pretty much The Only Sane Man™ and shaking his head, all, damn, what is up with all the fights to the death with each other and the raping unarmed women?

Then Merlin shows up again and says, 'no, seriously, you're evil and you're going to kill the king,' with a pretty graphic vision to back it up.

So Mordred shrugs and says, 'well, guess I'm evil and going to kill the king.'

So he does.

Huh?

I would have loved a Camelot story from Mordred's point of view – something that gives his actions justification, something that showed why he made the choices he does, and how he gets to the final battlefield – but this, no, did not do that.

Mario says

"You are more than noble," she said. Her voice was soft and made me think of wild roses, as did the softness of her pale pink mouth, as did her fragrance, light and fresh and free. "You are a king's son."

I Am Mordred is a novel about our main character Mordred, King Arthur's son, and his struggles to fight against his faith. As a baby, Mordred's father, King Arthur, tried to kill him, by sending him, and a group of newborn babies, to the sea, because of Merlin's prophecy that he would kill King Arthur later on in his life. Years, and years passed, and now, Mordred returns to Camelot to meet his father, and see if he really is a terrible and evil man, that he saw him as.

This novel surprised the hell out of me. It started out slow, and at the beginning, I even thought about putting it down, but after 50 pages or so, the story got so interesting and I finished the novel in one sitting. I loved reading about these characters, the struggles they faced, and the amazing world of King Arthur. I loved how Mordred was presented, and how he was just a human being that was wronged by his father. He wasn't evil... he was just a kid. To conclude, if you're a fan of this mythology, I definitely recommend picking it up, and struggling through the beginning, to get to the amazing rest of the novel.

Courtney says

Mordred is a young boy raised by a fisherwoman. He was young and happy until a woman rode up on a horse and took him away. Her name was Nyneve and she knew who Mordred really was, He was the only son of King Arthur. But instead of his birth being a joyous occasion the king tries to have him killed as a baby. Merlin prophesized that Mordred would kill King Arthur because of the nature of his birth, Mordred was conceived in an incestual relationship between Arthur and his sister Morgause. Nyneve takes Mordred to live with his mother, Morgause, in the castle with her husband who is a king in a neighboring land. At his mother's castle Mordred is met with only cold greetings and no love. As the years go by Mordred learns to cope with the loveless relationship that he has with his mother and brothers. Nyneve gives him a puppy that she is able to watch over him, a creature that is the only thing he ever loves. When he becomes of age he is able to travel to Camelot to become a knight at the round table of King Arthur. Mordred wants to hate King Arthur for what he tried to do for him, but he finds King Arthur to be a kind and nonjudgmental man. While the rest of humanity treats Mordred as though he is evil, Arthur treats him like any other of the knights in his court. Mordred goes on a quest to find a solution to fight his fate and keep him from killing King Arthur.

The author delicately handles difficult themes such as: incest, murder, affairs and death. These themes are common throughout the legends of Camelot that are taught in high schools and should not be glossed over. The book starts out on a serious note letting the reader know what is in store for them, "When I was a baby, my father tried to kill me," (3). The reader is informed in the beginning of the story that it will be a grim depressing tale. The story is told in first person, which poses a problem for the death of the character. The author handles this by having an afterward that is told in third person that explains to the reader what happens after Mordred ceases to tell his tale.

I think that this is a book that would be a great accompaniment with a lesson on the legends of Camelot. The legends have very little personal connections. The characters and their actions are the only things mentioned

and there is very little dialogue. Stories like this help to give the characters personality and help the reader connect to them. The author handles the issues that the book presents in a delicate manner. Mordred is the product of incest and this is an issue brought up in the book. The issue of sex is not graphic, merely implied. Therefore I do not think that this would be a problem for a mature class. It should definitely be included in school libraries.

Samantha Shaffer says

After I read I am Morgan le Fey on a whim I knew I had to read this book too. If you love books about Camelot and King Arthur you will enjoy this book. Gull the pup is the icing on the cake.

Katerina says

Incredibilmente un libro che ha Mordred come protagonista non è il mio preferito.

Il libro di Nancy Springer è un retelling che mette sotto i riflettori proprio Mordred, il bambino nato da un terribile incesto, destinato a mettere la parola fine alla leggenda di re Artù. Un personaggio negativo, il traditore, l'assassino: nella letteratura classica non c'è spazio per la redenzione o per la simpatia. È l'antagonista, puro e semplice.

La Springer, invece, fa di Mordred la voce narrante: il libro si apre con un capitolo cupissimo del mito, ossia l'omicidio dei bambini di maggio. Un giovanissimo Artù, appena divenuto re, che manda a morire quaranta bambini per ucciderne uno solo. Suo figlio.

Noi ritroviamo Mordred sei anni dopo, cresciuto da una coppia di pescatori, felice, innocente, amato... finché le ruote del destino non si mettono in moto e il piccolo viene portato da sua madre Morgause, da Lot, da una famiglia che non lo vuole e di certo non lo ama.

Il libro non è un retelling degli episodi arturiani più conosciuti, ma va ad analizzare un aspetto che molto spesso viene messo da parte, ossia cosa significa essere Mordred. Cosa vuol dire essere la persona destinata ad uccidere il proprio padre, a distruggere tutto.

Questo Mordred vive costantemente lo stigma sociale: la profezia di Merlino è stata resa pubblica, quindi tutti sanno cosa è destinato a fare e il ragazzo (perché per la maggior parte del libro ha sedici anni) è giudicato e condannato per qualcosa che non ha ancora commesso, e a nessuno importa che non voglia nemmeno farlo.

A questo si aggiunge il dilemma interiore: sarebbe più semplice, se fosse uno stronzo. Ma non lo è: è un ragazzo buono, adora Artù come re e come persona, ha uno spiccato senso di giustizia... ma, allo stesso tempo, i suoi sentimenti verso Artù come padre sono molto più ambigui e conflittuali.

Artù ha provato ad ucciderlo. Artù gli vuole bene, cerca di dimostrargli stima, per certi versi lo vizia... ma non lo riconosce mai come figlio, nemmeno in privato.

Mordred lo odia per questo.

Artù è così perfetto che solo ad odiarlo si sente in colpa.

Qui abbiamo il punto di vista di Mordred, ma soprattutto abbiamo il punto di vista di una pedina che cerca disperatamente di opporsi al suo destino senza speranza di infrangerlo: Mordred non ha nessuna possibilità di scelta, ed è furioso per questo, per come la sua intera vita sia l'accessorio della profezia di un altro. Perché parliamoci chiaro: la profezia è su Artù, non su di lui, e noi leggiamo di questo ragazzino che viaggia in lungo e in largo cercando un modo di cambiare le cose, per poi sbattere la faccia sempre lì, sempre a Camlann, sempre sul senso di colpa di Artù che lì vuole scontare la colpa di aver messo incinta la sorella e –

in questa versione – aver ucciso trentanove neonati, e a nulla vale la protesta di Mordred, che non ha fatto niente se non nascere e deve pagare lo stesso prezzo di suo padre.

Da un lato, quindi, abbiamo un'analisi interessante del personaggio e del suo ruolo, di quali possano essere le conseguenze a vivere una situazione così "tesa". Ci sono, però, alcuni aspetti negativi: il primo è che – nonostante tutto – Mordred è lagnoso. Ok, ne ha tutti i diritti, ma la comprensibile frustrazione per il fatto che niente e nessuno lo tenga in considerazione (è visto unicamente come un pezzo della profezia) ha come conseguenza che la maggior parte dei suoi pensieri siano un "Io io io io io io io io io io..." che alla lunga risulta fastidioso. A questo si aggiungono un paio di cose legate al target: questo è un libro per ragazzi (in patria è indicato dai 10 anni in su) e anche se in inquadrato in quest'ottica risulta molto pesante (omicidio, incesto, infanticidio, tanto per cominciare), per un pubblico adulto è troppo facilone. Per non parlare dello stile: premetto che non so quanto dipenda dalla traduzione (che ha adattato in italiano ogni nome, con risultati discutibili come Morgasia al posto di Morgause), è veramente troppo semplice ed infantile, a volte a discapito della storia. Diciamo che non c'è un connubio vincente tra temi complessi e scrittura accessibile ai più giovani.

L'eccessiva semplicità colpisce anche gli elementi più vicini alla leggenda: con due eccezioni, i cavalieri che vediamo sono dei bruti privi di quell'onore che si associa tipicamente alla Tavola Rotonda, e non si riesce a percepire la grandezza di Camelot. La figura di Merlino, inoltre, ne esce piuttosto malconcia.

Insomma, è un po' come se, nel tentativo di mostrare il punto di vista di Mordred, la Springer si fosse scordata di tenere in considerazione quello di tutti gli altri.

Artù mi lascia più perplessa, nel senso che è stato tratteggiato in modo interessante: un uomo forte e giusto, ma molto malinconico, che porta consapevolmente il peso di responsabilità e colpe sulle spalle, che mai si è perdonato quell'errore per cui trentanove bambini hanno perso la vita, e che sembra quasi guardare con sollievo all'inevitabile fine. Un'angolazione interessante, che raramente viene usata per il re, ma che forse avrebbe funzionato meglio in un'altro tipo di libro.

Però il finale mi è piaciuto un sacco.

In definitiva? Beh, un libro carino, sicuramente da leggere se – come me – si ama Mordred.

Sandra Strange says

This novel adds flesh to the legends of Mordred. It takes real squeezing to make Mordred a sympathetic protagonist. This novel at least explains his actions and makes his motivations believable. Mostly, the novel is fantasy adventure with a wisp of theme: struggle against fate, and self fulfilling prophecy: does Mordred become the myth only because he is prophesied to do those actions that destroy Arthur's Camelot? Do the prophecies come about because of his character combined with the circumstances of his birth. I can't recommend the novel wholeheartedly because of some of the explanation of the myth: too much rape and victimized women. Though these stories are only sidenotes, another theme is how helpless women are in the face of powerful, mythical and medieval men.

J. Ellyne says

About the author - Nancy Springer has been writing for forty years. She wrote dozens of books and three of them won awards. The Mordred Book was one of them that won. I don't know how well it sold because it was written in 1998 and after the turn of the century she stopped writing Camelot type books and began writing a series of young adult mystery novels. I don't know if those sold well or not either and I don't know if she plans to write any more because her last book was published in 2007.

Now about I am Mordred. It's a wonderful little book, just a few more words than a novella but so artistically crafted that it begs to be savored slowly like fine gourmet cuisine. So many sentences that just melt in your mouth but the good thing is you can read them over and over again and say, "Gee, I wish I could write a sentence that beautiful."

There's the obvious research too. I can tell she spent four times as many hours doing the research than she spent writing the book. I think she wrote the book slowly too though for its size. You can't write such beautifully crafted sentences fast. Her research includes all the true historical evidence about the Arthurian period, making the story ring true. I was a bit disappointed when she paid homage to Sir Thomas Mallory by including Lancelot and the Quest for the Holy Grail (briefly) in her story and was tempted to knock off a star just for that. Lancelot is a totally fictional (and totally unnecessary imo) character made up by Mallory almost a thousand years after the end of the Arthurian period. Mallory also crafted the fiction of the Quest for the Holy Grail from his imagination. No such thing ever happened. Mallory wrote fiction not based on any historical fact. Springer writes historical fiction based on facts given in many sources.

I forgave her for the Mallory rubbish when I read the Epilogue which is the most beautiful part of the book. I won't say why because it was a surprise I don't want to spoil for other readers. I cried when I read it, not because it was sad but because it was soooooo romantically lovely.

This book is like a prose poem, more like poetry than a conventional novel. It doesn't rhyme or anything like that but its so poetic. It grabs your emotions just like all really good poetry does.

All of the book except for the Epilogue is written in the first person point of view of an unreliable narrator (Mordred). Merlin has prophesied it's Mordred's destiny to kill his own father, King Arthur. Mordred is a good guy in this book and doesn't want to do this, so he fights valiantly and ferociously against this destiny. That's the plot of the book and it's what happens all through the book up until the Epilogue where well I can't say, you have to read it yourself. Don't peek at the Epilogue though; you'll miss a wonderful experience if you do.

Amy says

I read this as a kid and LOVED it. It was kind of dark and creepy, but the legends woven into it fascinated me to no end. I hope to find another copy soon.
