



King Arthur & the Half Man

Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

AUTHORS: Benjamin Knight, COUNTRY: Wales, GENRE: Fairytales



CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

KING ARTHUR

WRESTLER #1 / SLAVE #1

WRESTLER #2 / SLAVE #2

WRESTLER #3 / SLAVE #3

WRESTLER #4 / SLAVE #4

MERLIN

CONOR

QUINLAN

GAWAIN

MALVIN

HANNER DYN#1

If there are performance notes, they can be found on the pages following the script

Scene 1 – Cornwall

[**Stage set:** The stage is divided into two sections. One half will serve as the Castle in Cornwall and KING ARTHUR'S ship "Prydwen." The other half of the stage will be Hanner Dyn's island. See specifics for Hanner Dyn's island in Scene 2.]

[On stage a large ring is drawn on the floor with chalk (or it can be outlined with Styrofoam rocks). KING ARTHUR and WRESTLER #1 are standing up inside the ring and pretending to wrestle. The ring can also be represented by a circle surrounded by netting.]

[Standing around the ring and jeering, are WRESTLER #2, WRESTLER #3, WRESTLER #4, QUINLAN and MALVIN. CONOR is a druid of the court, meaning a wise man. CONOR watches anxiously.]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

Hello, everyone. You've heard of King Arthur, right? This tale about King Arthur originated in Wales. The story is called, "King Arthur & the Half Man" and it's brought to you from Stories to Grow by.

[NARRATOR steps forward.]

NARRATOR:

Ladies, and gentlemen, introducing the rightful King of England, the raging regent, the ruler who'll school ya – his name is King Arthur!

[Enter KING ARTHUR, with his arms raised victoriously. All characters cheer.]

NARRATOR (cont.):

That's right, he's the guy who pulled the sword from the enchanted stone to claim the throne and now, he will prove his kingly might to his subjects! He's as strong as a herd of bulls. And as you can hear from the clamor, people from all over the kingdom want to challenge him.

[In the background, WRESTLER #1 squares up to KING ARTHUR and they lock into a fight, straining and trying to drop each other to the floor. (Note: this is PRETEND – practice to be SAFE.) WRESTLER #1 falls to the ground and KING ARTHUR wins. WRESTLERS and NARRATOR cheer. KING ARTHUR comically flexes a bicep. Suddenly, WRESTLER #2 leaves the group and he, too, begins grappling with KING ARTHUR.]

NARRATOR:

But for all the competitors he fought, none could challenge his dominance.

KING ARTHUR:

Give me your worst!

WRESTLER 3:

Give him the Sword-in-the-Stone inverted Facelock hold!

WRESTLER 4:

Give him the Crown Smackdown!

[In the background, KING ARTHUR defeats WRESTLER #2. (Again, this is make-pretend – no one is really touched.) The crowd cheers.]

KING ARTHUR:

(to Wrestlers) Another easy fight. This is starting to bore me! Surely, there must be a worthy opponent among the lot of you!

[WRESTLERS look at each other, ashamed.]

WRESTLER #3:

A-actually, Sire, you have already bested all of us...

WRESTLER #1:

(on the ground) My legs! I cannot feel my legs anymore!

KING ARTHUR:

(Annoyed) Bah! Begone, you riff-raff! I will not be satisfied until I find an opponent whose strength can match mine, the great King Arthur!

[WRESTLERS exit, heads bowed. CONOR, who remains, approaches.]

KING ARTHUR:

Ah, Conor! My wisest friend. Not counting a certain wizard, of course!

[Enter MERLIN.]

MERLIN:

Did someone call me?

NARRATOR:

Sorry Merlin, you're not in this story. Shoo!

[Exit MERLIN.]

CONOR:

My liege! You have already proven that you have no match in Cornwall. Can't you find other things to pursue? I know a forest with a lot of deer...

KING ARTHUR:

Nope. Can't wrestle a deer.

CONOR:

I didn't mean- (sighs) How about playing the lute?

KING ARTHUR:

Don't you remember my last lute solo? I played so fast that it caught on fire!

CONOR:

So it did! Ah, it may be impossible to find you a wrestling challenger who is truly worthy.

KING ARTHUR:

What's a king to do? I am simply the strongest there is, in all of Cornwall.

QUINLAN:

(off stage) But what about OUTSIDE of Cornwall?

[KING ARTHUR and CONOR look around for the source of the voice.]

KING ARTHUR:

Who goes there? Are you challenging me to wrestle, spectre?

[KING ARTHUR gets in wrestling-ready position. QUINLAN enters.]

QUINLAN:

No indeed, my king. A spectre I am not. My name is Quinlan, an old wrestling master. I have come to—

KING ARTHUR:

(cutting off Quinlan and taking a stand) Ah! A challenger! Let's have at you, then, Quinlan!

QUINLAN:

No, I mean, I've come to tell you ABOUT a challenger, the only one left who is worthy to fight you, Your Highness.

[KING ARTHUR stands back to normal.]

KING ARTHUR:

Oh! (looks around) Do tell, sir, where can I find this man?

QUINLAN:

Not in Cornwall but on a small island to the south, unknown to many. On this island lives a man named Hanner Dyn. He is the champion of those lands, and the wrestler to end all wrestlers...

KING ARTHUR:

Hanner Dyn, eh? What kind of bloke is he?

QUINLAN:

Certainly a sight to behold. He has tracts of land...

KING ARTHUR:

(to audience) So do I!

QUINLAN (Cont.):

...filled with conquered men he has made his slaves!

KING ARTHUR:

(to audience) Zounds! Even I'M not that bad!

QUINLAN:

His abilities are almost (to audience, dramatically) supernatural!

KING ARTHUR:

Sounds like a worthy competitor.

QUINLAN:

Oh, he is, Sire. Who knows? He might even prove more than a match for you!

KING ARTHUR:

What?! We will see about that! (to Conor) Conor! Have my men prepare my ship, Prydwen. (pronounce: PRIHD-win).

[Stagehands and WRESTLERS begin to transition from Cornwall to Prydwen, bringing the boat on and removing the ring from the stage. (**See Performance Notes** for ideas on how to make this a smooth transition.) (**See Performance Notes** for ideas on how to make the boat and for ideas on boat props.)]

KING ARTHUR:

We will set sail to find this Hanner Dyn. (to audience, dramatically) And, by my throne, I will conquer him!

CONOR:

As you wish, Your Majesty. (to audience) We may have a problem. If the King prevails in the match, he will be pleased. But if he does not... oh, why did Quinlan even mention this?

[ALL exit.]

Scene 2 – Hanner Dyn’s Island

[**Stage set:** On the stage, four hard-faced and miserable SLAVES are standing towards the back with various tools, working in the field.]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

King Arthur set out with his men, in search of the wrestler-to-end-all-wrestlers. After weeks of sailing from island-to-island in the waters now known as the English Channel, the brave and bold King Arthur eventually found an old sailor who knew the location of the legendary Hanner Dyn.

[KING ARTHUR, CONOR, and Arthur’s knights, GAWAIN and MALVIN, enter. SLAVES pay them no attention.]

KING ARTHUR:

(looks around) This truly is a strange and beautiful place! It’s hard to believe such a strong fighter would be from somewhere so... flowery. Where could this Hanner Dyn be, anyway?

CONOR:

(points to Slaves) Perhaps it’s one of those hardy men, Sire.

KING ARTHUR:

Perhaps! (shouts to Slaves) You there! Might any of you be the legendary Hanner Dyn?

[Suddenly, all SLAVES stop their work and turn to look at KING ARTHUR.]

KING ARTHUR:

(to audience) So, which of you one is it?

GAWAIN:

I bet we can find out if we ask someone, Your Majesty.

[HANNER DYN enters, skipping around merrily and humming. KING ARTHUR does a double-take as he sees him.]

KING ARTHUR:

(to Hanner Dyn, not knowing who he is) You there, boy! Could you tell me which of these men is Hanner Dyn?

HANNER DYN:

None of them!

KING ARTHUR:

So, he is not here, then?

HANNER DYN:

Oh, Hanner Dyn is most certainly here.

KING ARTHUR:

Gadzooks~! Does this Hanner Dyn have the power to be invisible?

HANNER DYN:

(laughs) No! You see – I AM Hanner Dyn!

[There is a pause as KING ARTHUR, CONOR, GAWAIN and MALVIN all look at each other, before erupting into laughter.]

KING ARTHUR:

There must be some mistake. I was told that Hanner Dyn was a champion wrestler.

HANNER DYN:

I am all that, and more!

KING ARTHUR:

You're but a child!

HANNER DYN:

I may be small, I'll grant you. Still, look at this land, these slaves –all of it is mine.

KING ARTHUR:

Haha, sure it is, child! You may be small in stature but what a big imagination you have. (to Conor) It seems we have wasted our time, Conor.

HANNER DYN:

You traveled a long distance to come here. Don't go without giving me a try. (starts to weave about, wrestling-style) Come on! If you're all that confident.

KING ARTHUR:

I think not. Truly, that would be unsporting.

HANNER DYN:

I get it now .. you're worried about an upset. (continues to weave about, wrestling-style) Go on then, if you're afraid!

KING ARTHUR:

(sighs) Very well.

[KING ARTHUR easily picks up HANNER DYN, turns him around and sets him down. (Note: BE CAREFUL, and PRACTICE THIS!)]

KING ARTHUR:

I think we settled THAT.

HANNER DYN:

(shrugs) So it is, then. Well, as you are here, how about a tour of my island?

KING ARTHUR:

Why not? (to Conor, Gawain and Malvin) Come along with us.

[HANNER DYN takes KING ARTHUR by the hand. CONOR, GAWAIN and MALVIN follow, and they walk around the stage. As NARRATOR speaks the lines below, HANNER DYN gestures as if he is showing KING ARTHUR various parts of the island, and KING ARTHUR nods in response.]

NARRATOR:

And so Hanner Dyn showed King Arthur about the island, showing him the gardens and fields. He also showed the King the rows of men toiling in the meadows and felling trees.

HANNER DYN:

They all work for me.

KING ARTHUR:

Is that so? Someone so young, and you have all this.

HANNER DYN:

Maybe that's why my nickname is the "Half-Man." Well, no doubt you must be hungry and thirsty. Come to my house. I have every kind of fruit and beverage you can imagine.

KING ARTHUR:

That sounds most pleasant. But then we must be getting on.

[ALL exit.]

NARRATOR:

So the three of them enjoyed a visit at the home of Hanner Dyn. Soon, half the day had passed away, and King Arthur and his men, full of good food and good cheer, were ready to travel home. The Half-Man led King Arthur and Conor back to the ship, where the crew awaited them.

[ALL enter.]

HANNER DYN:

Farewell, King Arthur! Remember, you are always welcome to come back and visit me again!

KING ARTHUR:

I just may do that. Farewell, young friend.

HANNER DYN:

Until we meet again.

[KING ARTHUR, CONOR, GAWAIN and MALVIN exit through the Prydwen side of the stage.
HANNER DYN exits to the opposite side.]

NARRATOR:

King Arthur sailed back home with his men. But as the months passed, he began to miss the island and the boy he met there. Before long, he returned to the island of Hanner-Dyn.

[KING ARTHUR, CONOR, GAWAIN and MALVIN enter.]

KING ARTHUR:

(sighs heavily) Oh, it's great to be back on this beautiful island!

CONOR:

As you have said before, Sire, it's nice to get away from the castle every now and again.

KING ARTHUR:

Well yes. I wonder where that young Hanner Dyn chap is?

HANNER DYN:

(off stage) Here I am!

[HANNER DYN enters. He is visibly taller than before, being played by a different actor wearing the same hat. (See Performance Notes for costume suggestions.)]

KING ARTHUR:

Well, look at you! That's some growth spurt you've had, young Hanner Dyn!

GAWAIN:

Is this even possible?

MALVIN:

Blimey! We must have been away longer than we thought!

HANNER DYN:

Your Highness, I was thinking, now that I'm bigger, I could give you more of a challenge. (starts to weave about, challenging King Arthur to wrestle)

KING ARTHUR:

Hah! Some spirit you have. Well, why not? Give it your all.

[HANNER DYN and KING ARTHUR grapple. They struggle for a bit, but KING ARTHUR still wins. (Another reminder, this is PRETEND. Be careful, and practice!)]

KING ARTHUR:

A noble effort, young man. But you are still no match for me!

HANNER DYN:

(dusts himself down) Not this time, Your Highness. But challenge me in a few months. I promise I will be improved.

KING ARTHUR:

(to audience) Get a load of this kid! (to Hanner Dyn) If you say so, lad. If you're not careful, you'll get my hopes up!

HANNER DYN:

(still dusting off) That's the idea.

[HANNER DYN gives a quick bow to the King. HANNER DYN exits.]

KING ARTHUR:

(to Conor) Come along, Conor. The sooner we return home, the sooner we'll be able to come back and see how much of a challenge that young man presents.

GAWAIN:

Back to the Pridwynn (pronounce: PRIHD-win) mother ship!

MALVIN:

At once, Your Majesty.

CONOR:

(to King Arthur) Sire, are you sure it's a good idea to sail out here yet again to wrestle this lad? You have a country to run back home, if you don't mind my saying so.

KING ARTHUR:

I'm aware of that, Conor! but everyone needs a bit of fun every now and then! You need to loosen up a little, my friend.

[KING ARTHUR exits with GAWAIN and MALVIN following behind.]

CONOR:

(to audience) I worry about the King. He seems to feel compelled to keep coming back here, again and again. But why?

[CONOR exits.]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

Conor had good reason to worry. For months, Arthur could only think about his impending challenge – nothing in his life was as important to him as the fight. Finally, the time had come for him to return to the island.

[KING ARTHUR, CONOR, GALWAIN and MALVIN enter.]

CONOR:

Sire, I really don't think this is a good idea.

KING ARTHUR:

For goodness sake, Conor, you've been prattling on about this for three months straight. Can't you just let me enjoy myself? (shouts) Hanner Dyn! I am here for your challenge. Let me see how much you've grown this time!

[HANNER DYN enters and appears full grown (see Performance Notes)]

HANNER DYN:

Greetings, Your Highness! Are you ready?

GAWAIN:

How could this be?

MALVIN:

This is a marvel!

[KING ARTHUR, CONOR, GAWAIN and MALVIN are amazed. KING ARTHUR turns to HANNER DYN.]

KING ARTHUR:

You have grown into your full height, that's for sure. Yes, I am ready. I have been waiting for this, for months! Let's do this!

[KING ARTHUR and HANNER DYN grapple. They are evenly matched this time. KING ARTHUR is visibly straining.]

KING ARTHUR:

You certainly have gotten stronger, Hanner Dyn!

CONOR:

Sire, stop! If you were hurt, who would lead your subjects?

KING ARTHUR:

Leave me alone, I can handle it!

CONOR:

No! It's-

KING ARTHUR:

Conor, you're throwing me off my game!

CONOR:

Sire, you don't understand. He's not merely a boy! Hanner Dyn is...

[They struggle for a little longer. HANNER DYN begins to overpower KING ARTHUR. Just as all hope seems lost, the tables turn. KING ARTHUR pushes HANNER DYN to the ground. (as before, this is pretend so practice for safety!)]

KING ARTHUR:

(raises arms victoriously but he is obviously tired) I did it!

[KING ARTHUR faints.]

CONOR:

He's passed out! Oh, somehow I just knew this would end badly! (fans the fallen KING) Gawain! Malvin! Help the King back to the Prydwen (pronounce: PRIHD-win)!

[GAWAIN, MALVIN, and CONOR help to lift KING ARTHUR and move him offstage.]

SCENE 3 – Prydwen

[**Stage set:** The flat “boat” which was brought on at the end of Scene 1, is not onstage. If you have some boating props, you can also bring them onto the stage. (**See Performance Notes** for ideas on making the boat and ideas on boat props.)]

[KING ARTHUR lies propped-up against the mizzen mast (note: A mizzen mast is the third of three masts on a sailing ship. It can be simulated by a simple post) in the center of the set. KING ARTHUR faces the audience, surrounded by CONOR, GAWAIN and MALVIN.]

CONOR:

(shakes King Arthur by the shoulder) Your Majesty! Please. Wake up!

[KING ARTHUR rouses. He looks confused by his surroundings.]

KING ARTHUR:

(groggy) Where am I?

CONOR:

(excited) Thank goodness you’re okay! You passed out while fighting Hanner Dyn!

KING ARTHUR:

I did win though, didn’t I?

GAWAIN:

Sire, you won – umm – gloriously!

CONOR:

You did win, Sire. Though if I may say so (glares at Gawain)... barely.

KING ARTHUR:

(angrily) What did you say?

CONOR:

Sire, may I take the liberty of speaking honestly to you? As your trusted advisor and friend, I mean.

KING ARTHUR:

Speak your mind, old man. You have earned it, after so many years of service.

CONOR:

My liege, do you not see what was happening? Each time you return, the strength of the Half-Man grows. The next match might have been your last. For you may not have noticed, but each

slave in his fields was a former opponent ... Another poor soul who came back over and over, determined to win.

KING ARTHUR:

What are you saying?

CONOR:

At first, the Half-Man is small and easy to overtake. But each time he gets bigger and more powerful until he is strong enough to defeat his opponent. And then the opponent – that would be you – becomes his slave.

KING ARTHUR:

Those slaves in the fields were his former opponents?

CONOR:

(nods) Your Majesty, don't you know what the name Hanner Dyn means? It means – "Habit." And the force of habit, at first weak, grows stronger and stronger each time. Eventually it can conquering even a king!

KING ARTHUR:

(stands) THIS king will never be a slave to Habit. Conor, my wise and trusted friend, we shall leave here and never return to this wicked island!

CONOR:

Music to my ears, Your Highness.

KING ARTHUR:

I still love to wrestle, though. I'm picturing a royal wrestling match back home. Wrestlers from miles around will come to compete.

GAWAIN:

Indeed they will, Your Majesty.

KING ARTHUR:

And I will no doubt win the match.

MALVIN:

Indeed, Sire.

KING ARTHUR:

For I am the King, am I not?

CONOR:

Indeed. The healthiest King in the world among healthy men, Your Majesty!

[CONOR, GAWAIN and MALVIN laugh, and bow to KING ARTHUR.]

[If you have a curtain, close it now. If you do not, fade the lights. If you have no stage lights, all actors come on stage and bow to the audience.]



Performance Notes for King Arthur and the Half Man

- 1.** *Students can read the play aloud while sitting in the classroom.* Ask the readers to skip all bracketed stage directions. You may prefer to rotate your actors to give all students a chance to read the speaking parts.
- 2.** *Students can perform the play in the classroom.* Clear an area that can be used as the stage. Have the audience sit on the floor in front of the stage. Students in the play can make simple costumes and/or sets as described below. When the scene change, the characters "on stage" simply walk to the back of the room where they wait until their next appearance "on stage."
- 3.** *Students can perform the play on stage.* Refer to the production notes that follow. Ask the actors to enter from the back of the room and move through the audience as they approach the stage.

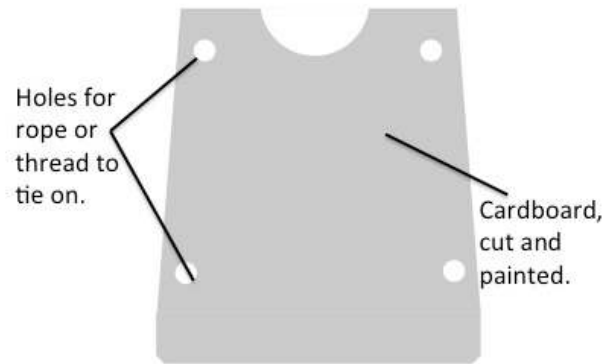


COSTUMES

- KING ARTHUR — A robe and a crown.
- WRESTLERS — Simple dull-colored peasant clothing.
- CONOR — A long brown robe with a hood, along with a big white beard.
- QUINLAN — A shifty character, wearing simple clothes and a black hood.
- GAWAIN and MALVIN — Black clothes with cardboard chest plate. Cut the shape of a chest plate from cardboard and paint or spray paint it gray or silver. Punch holes in the sides so that plate can be tied around actor's waist and neck.



See image on next page:



They also carry plastic or cardboard swords by their sides. See Prop notes for swords.

- SLAVES — Plain-colored rags. Each of them holds a hoe made from cardboard to till the soil. See Prop notes.
- HANNER DYN — Played by three actors. Each wears colorful clothing and the same flamboyant hat to mark each actor as the same character.



PROPS

Scene 1

- Cardboard swords for GAWAIN and MALVIN. Cut swords from thick cardboard. Paint the handle one color, perhaps black, and paint the blade gray or silver.

Scene 2

- Tools for servants- Rakes and hoes made from cardboard. Cut the shape of a rake or hoe out of a long piece of thick cardboard. Paint the handle one color, perhaps red or brown, and paint the bottom gray or silver.



Scene 3

- Optional: Boat items, such as oars made from cardboard, ropes, etc.



SETS

To make transitions easier, divide the stage into two sections. If you want to make a backdrop, you can paint it to show the two locations, or you can just rely on set pieces. The three locations are:

- 1) The Castle in Cornwall/Prydwen, King Arthur's Boat on one half of the stage. See more details for transitions below.
- 2) Hanner Dyn's Island, on the other half of the stage.

Scene 1 — The Castle in Cornwall. This takes place in the grounds of a castle. If you make a backdrop, you can paint it to look like a castle wall. Since this is where the wrestling matches take place, you can create a wrestling ring by drawing a circle on the ground with chalk or placing stones, made from Styrofoam, in a circle on the ground.

Transition Note: At the end of Scene 1, when KING ARTHUR says, "Have my men prepare my ship, Prydwen", WRESTLERS can remove stones if there are any, while stage hands, who can dress as royal guards, can bring on the boat.

If you are using backdrops, you can have them switch those out here as well.

See Scene 3 notes for specifics on set.

Scene 2 — Hanner Dyn's island. If you have a backdrop, it can show fields, plants, and crops. You can also place a few plants onstage near where the SLAVES will be working. These can be real or made from cardboard.

Scene 3 — On board Prydwen, King Arthur's ship. If you have a backdrop, it can show the sea, and the sun in the sky. The boat is made from cardboard, though you only have to make the back of the boat. This way, actors can stand/lay in front of the cardboard piece and it will give the appearance of being on the boat.

Paint the cardboard various shades of brown, to resemble planks and sides of the boat. Add some lines and shading, if possible, to give the illusion of depth. Prop boat up against a chair or milk crate or something else that is sturdy.

Optional: You can make a flag for the boat. On the boat itself, paint a gray



line, starting in the center of the deck and going up. At the top of the cardboard flat, extend the flagpole by attaching a piece of cardboard the width of the line

and painting it gray as well.

Google image search picture of King Arthur's flag (there are a few different options, depending on the source) and print out a copy of the one you want to use, or use it as a guide in making your own. Glue or tape the picture to thicker paper or a piece of cardboard, and duct tape the flag to the top of the pole.

See image below:

