

Discussion Questions for *The Faerie Queene*, Book 1, Canto 1.

Question Set ONE: ARMOR and VIRTUE

Consider:

- the representation of Redcrosse (1.1.1-3)
- the “glistening” light of his armor in Error’s den (14.4).
- Una’s exclamation: “Well worthy be you of that Armorie” (27.5)
- Compare to the language used to describe Redcrosse during his fight with Error: (vv. 17, 24).

What does the representation of Redcrosse and his armor tell us about the allegorical relationship between Redcrosse’s battle with Error and the larger quest for Holiness?

Question Set TWO: WANDERING WOOD

Consider

- the “path” that leads into and out of the Wood: “Faire harbour” (v. 8); “labyrinth” (v. 11).

Compare to the path they take *after* the battle with Error “which beaten was most plaine” (28.3).

What accounts for this change?

Consider

- how they enter onto the path that takes them from the Wood: (28.1-2);
- The juxtaposition of their escape with their meeting of the “aged Sire” (29.2).

What is the nature of the Wandering Wood?

What is the relationship between Redcrosse and the Wandering Wood / Error?

Hint: consider Mephistopheles’ response to Faustus’s question about hell.

Question Set THREE: VISION AND ERROUR

What is the significance of vision in the latter half of the canto?

Consider:

- Archimago’s presentation (v. 29, v. 35);
- The recurrence of “seeming”;
- False Una (v. 45-46), and her face like a “bayted hooke” (1.1.49.6).

What is the relationship between beauty and the Wandering Wood and between beauty and VISION?

Question Set FOUR: ARCHITECTURE OF IMAGES

What is the significance of the lengthy dwelling on Morpheus who sends a “fit false dreame” (1.1.43.9) for Archimago?

Consider:

- Redcrosse’s dream in which it “seemèd him his Lady by him lay” (1.1.47.7) and his waking to find Una in his bed (1.1.49);
- His dismay at finding his “gentle Dame so light, / For whose defense he was to shed his blood” (1.1.55.2-3);
- “saw his labour all in vaine” (1.1.55.8): The ambiguous pronoun “he” (1.1.55.8-9). Does it refer to Redcrosse or to the demon dream?

What does the dream episode tell us about the relationship between reality and illusion and about the Knight’s quest for holiness and knightly honour?