

The Catholic Response to Transgenderism

CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 369

CCC 2333–2335

MATERIALS

- ▶ [The New Thinking](#)
- ▶ [A Lady and her Knight/A Knight and his Lady](#)
- ▶ [Speaking the Truth in Love to Trans-Identified Family and Friends](#)

SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes

Teacher Background

To be human is to be a personal union of a body and spirit. We are not just bodies with mental functions, and we are not just minds housed in a flesh-machine. We are one, integrated reality. From the moment each of us was conceived, when our spiritual soul was united with the very first cell of our body, we were male or female. Secondary characteristics can be altered by taking large doses of opposite-sex hormones, or by removing healthy body parts, but we can never cease being male or female.



HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Gender ideology asserts that there are no essential differences between men and women. In this lesson, students will encounter these and other basic claims of transgender ideology, and learn how they contradict reality. Students will be provided strategies for encountering and accompanying trans-identifying friends or family members, without compromising truth or love.

Activity

- The day before, distribute [The Catholic Response to Transgenderism](#) for students to read at home, asking them to read it carefully and discuss responses to the questions with their parents.
- In class, discuss responses as large group. Throughout discussion, emphasize as needed that our feelings never define us, and that disagreement is not hatred.

The New Thinking

Directions: Read the essay and then discuss the questions that follow.

If you had reached adulthood before the 2000s, you would never have heard of being "trans." You would have known about cross-dressers, or transvestites (from the Latin *trans* "across," and *vestis* "garment" or "clothing"). Transvestites are typically adult men who like to dress in women's clothes. You might have heard of Gender Identity Disorder (or Gender Dysphoria), where a person experiences a sense that they are the other sex, or rare psychological conditions.

Your own life experience and knowledge of history would have informed you that not all stereotypes about boys and girls are based in science. Some little girls like sports better than dolls, and some boys are more drawn to dancing than to sports. While most men are physically larger and stronger than most women, some women are larger and stronger than some men. That is perfectly normal! And while most women are more nurturing than most men, some men are more naturally nurturing than some women. Again—perfectly normal!

But gender ideology insists that feelings and stereotypes about sex determine reality. Gender ideology says that if you're unhappy or unsatisfied with being the sex that you are, or with trying to be what culture says a boy or a girl should be, then it may be that you're not actually a boy or girl. And if anyone disagrees with that idea, that person is either ignorant, or a hateful bigot, or "transphobic." This claim is false, for many reasons we will explore.



The Marriage Feast at Cana, Juan de Harandes

The Unchangeable Reality of Sex

Being human is to be a personal union of a body and spirit. You're not just a body with mental functions, and you're not just a mind being inside a flesh-machine. You are one, integrated reality. You're also an individual person with unique qualities and quirks, and a unique history and environment, each of which contribute to who you are. Your personality can change and grow, but your nature is a body-spirit unity. From the moment of your conception, the moment when your spiritual soul was united with the

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THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO TRANSGENDERISM

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THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO TRANSGENDERISM

- C. Then, distribute [A Lady and her Knight/A Knight and his Lady](#). Ask students to spend a few minutes studying the two paintings, and then discussing the questions. You may choose to have students work in small groups, or you could discuss as a large group. Use the answer key to guide discussion.
- D. Finally, distribute Speaking the [Truth in Love to Trans-Identified Family and Friends](#) and have students read and discuss it in groups for a few moments. Then reconvene the class and discuss each tip in turn as a large group.
- E. Encourage students to share all the materials from class today with their parents.

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Munkacsy's *Christ Before Pilate*

Directions: Look at the painting for a few moments, then discuss the conversation questions.



Christ Before Pilate, Munkacsy

1 What biblical scene does this painting depict?

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Speaking the Truth in Love to Trans-Identified Family and Friends

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- 1 **Pray.**
Pray for the person, that they may come to see themselves as God sees them. Pray for humility, kindness, and wisdom for yourself.
- 2 **Spend time together doing typical, favorite activities.**
Find things to do that do not focus on the person's perceived trans identity. Spend time away from social media and outdoors in nature as much as possible.
- 3 **In conversations, ask questions to understand the person's experience.**
Remember that your goal is not to win an argument or change the person's mind, but to understand what they are going through so you can offer support. With prudence, you may gently ask questions that may prompt deeper thinking. For example, "If all trans women are women, are all women trans women?" Or, "If the body does not determine sex, how does changing one's body reflect it?"
- 4 **Be patient.**
Don't allow yourself to be discouraged into thinking nothing good can come from prayerfully accompanying your confused friend or family member towards the truth.
- 5 **Be truthful and compassionate.**
You can't separate compassion and truth. They are two sides of the same coin. Therefore, you must never speak the truth in anything but charity and love. And even more, it is never compassionate to lead someone away from the truth, offend the person, but not the perceived trans-identity. Everything we do and say should be both just and merciful.

For short videos with examples of how to respond to common questions about transgender identification, visit SophiaOnline.org/transgender

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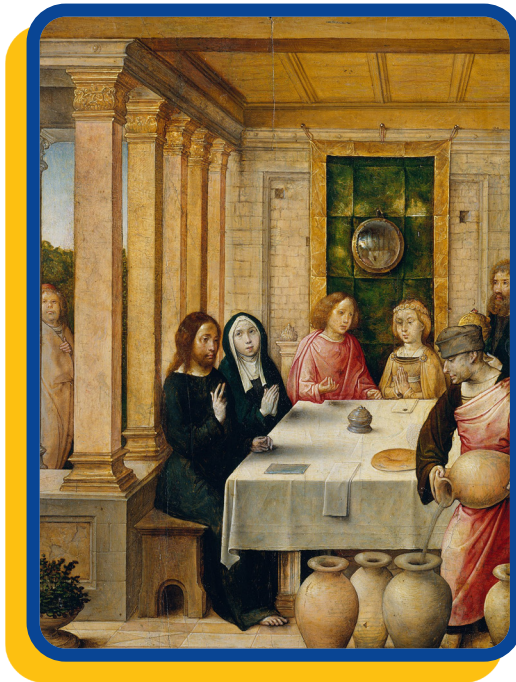
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STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

very first cell of your body, you were male or female. As your body grew with the multiplication and differentiation of its cells, your soul animated and filled it, and each cell in your body was, and always will be, either male or female. If you are male, each cell in your heart, skin, brain, fingers, and toes is male. If you're female, your cells are female all the way. Superficial characteristics can be altered by taking large doses of opposite-sex hormones, by taking drugs that stop puberty, or by cutting off body parts, but you can never cease being male or female. This unchangeable reality is what we call "sex".



Girl with a Pearl Earring, Johannes Vermeer.

Sex and Sex Roles

Throughout history, men and women have tended to "specialize" in their social roles. Cultures vary widely, but in each place and time, men have been more likely to do some things, and women others. There is nothing necessarily wrong with deviating from these. For example, there is nothing disordered or contrary to nature in a woman driving a truck, or a man becoming a nurse. But there is something deeply disordered about a man thinking he's really a woman. A man who tries to be a woman is rejecting his identity and trying to divorce his spirit from his body. Rather than "embracing who he really is," or "living his authentic self" as gender ideology might say about trans-identification, he is rejecting who he really is, and living a fantasy instead.

The Gift of Our Identity

Our identity is neither a purely mental phenomenon, nor is it something we craft ourselves. On the level of nature, we are each composed of a soul (with an intellect and a will) and a body (with its various faculties), and made in the image and likeness of God. On the level of grace, our identity is a son or daughter of God by virtue of Christ's work. Notice the Church has never said our identity is that of "child of God," but specifically His son or His daughter. This distinction is because being a girl, or being a boy, is a unique and special thing, an integral part of our identity.

The Truth with Compassion

Those who experience body-or identity-related distress need love and understanding, never hatred or mockery. They are or may perceive themselves to be the target of vitriol and misunderstanding.

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

People in this situation are very vulnerable. Tragically, many have been misled to believe that the only thing that will make them happy is embracing a belief that goes against objective reality. Since this reality is artificial, it needs to be constantly propped up or “affirmed” by everyone else. Being both truthful and loving toward

people in this state of mind — especially if they’ve permanently altered their bodies with hormones and surgeries — is not a simple task, but it is a requirement for a Christian. Later in this lesson, we will consider some strategies for being truthful in a loving way.

Discussion Questions

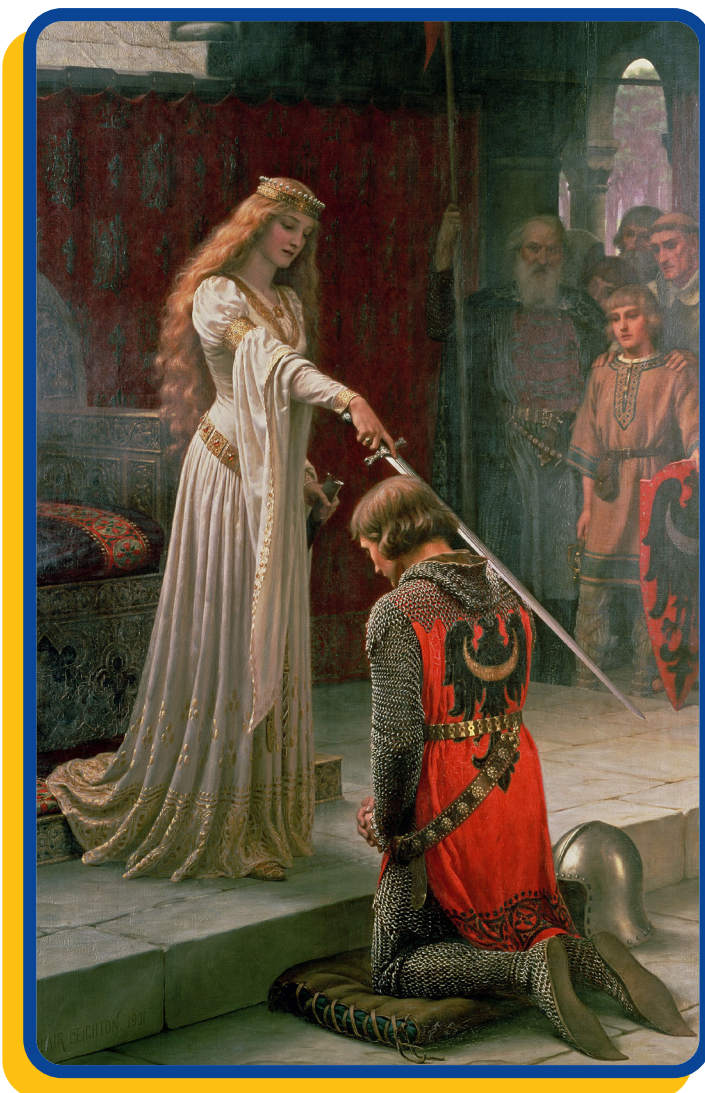
- 1 Try to remember the first time you encountered a male portraying himself as female, or vice-versa. What is the difference between your natural reaction and feelings, and how our culture expects you to feel? (If you are afraid to even acknowledge your natural reaction, what might this suggest about our culture's current values?)
- 2 After high school you will probably encounter aggressive forms of gender ideology. How will you face this challenge with the appropriate balance of kindness, justice, and discretion? How can you form friendships with LGBT-identifying friends, which respect the boundaries of truth, while permitting you to witness mercy?

Discussion Questions Answer Key:

1. **Accept reasoned answers. Our culture tries to say that any reaction other than affirmation is hateful; this false ideology is completely opposed to reality and in fact harms the people it claims to help. It is never good or helpful to lead someone away from the truth**
2. **Accept reasoned answers that do not separate compassion and truth. It is never compassionate or loving to lead someone away from the truth, but you do not want to share the truth without compassion, because that would be hurtful. Possible answers include: showing kindness and politeness, protecting the person from real harm, expecting friendship to be a “two-way-street” (meaning the LGBT-identifying person must also respect the student’s boundaries), being willing to pursue common interests when present.**

A Lady and her Knight/ A Knight and his Lady

Directions: Study the two images carefully and provide thoughtful answers to the questions.



The Accolade, Edmond Leighton

- 1 Who is in the position of authority in this picture?

The lady or queen is in the position of authority, since she is bestowing knighthood on a kneeling man.

- 2 Who is in the position of subjection or vulnerability in this picture?

The knight-to-be, as he is kneeling and receiving his office from the lady.

- 3 Does this image also symbolize something in human life, or remind you of anything from your experience?

In life, men receive their lives and much of their formation from their mothers. Boys are subject to their mother's (and father's) authority. In marriage, young men receive both encouragement and a new, focused sense of responsibility from their wives.

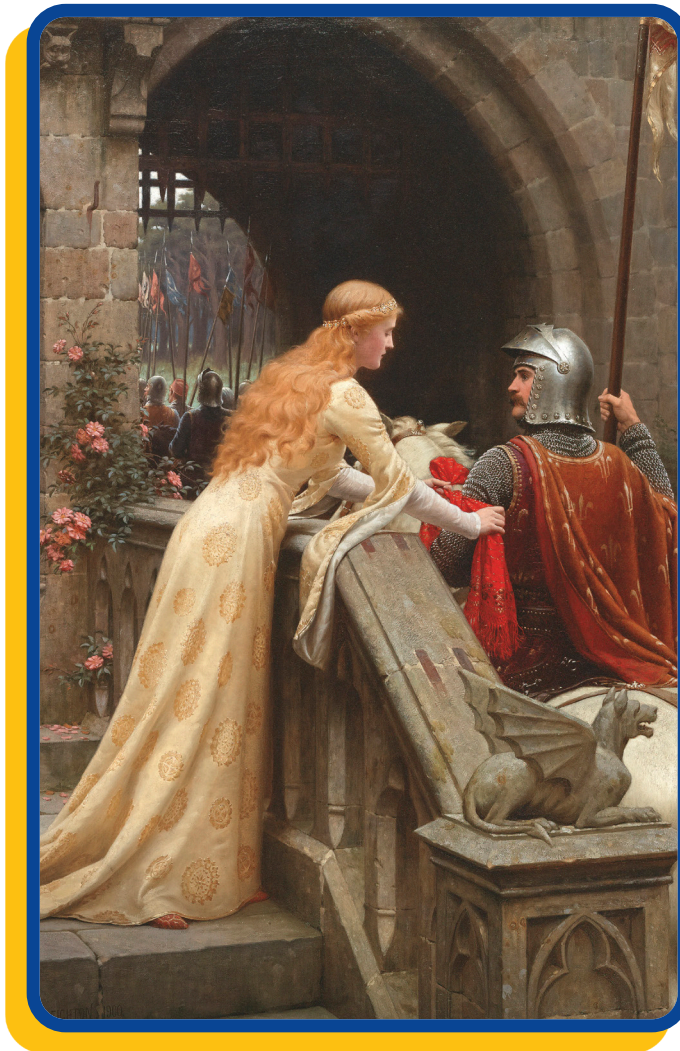
STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 4 Who is in the position of authority in this picture?

The knight going off to war seems to be in a position of authority, as he has a mission for which he has been appointed. His authority is directed toward protecting and preserving the community, of which she is a part.

- 5 Who is in the position of subjection or vulnerability in this picture?

The lady is in a position of vulnerability because she supports and encourages the knight but is not in the battle herself. He is her protector.



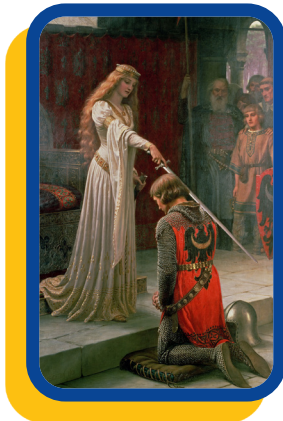
Godspeed, Edmond Leighton

- 6 Does this image also symbolize something in human life, or remind you of anything from your experience?

Marriage in the order of grace is a sign of the union between Christ and His Church; fathers are called to love, protect, and provide for their wives and give their lives for them. In many families, fathers provide by going to work, while mothers (even when they do work) maintain the household and family more directly. Significantly, Catholic social teaching requires employers to consider employee's needs as well as their contributions, and defines just wages as those that can support a family (CCC 2434). Men often view their relationship to work as one of battling for the sake of their "kingdom" (household).

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

Comparing both paintings:



- 6 If you see differences in positions of authority and of subjection or vulnerability in these two paintings, what does that suggest to you about the relations of the sexes in real life?

It suggests that, at different times, men and women trade places of authority and subjection or vulnerability. One example is in marriage: the sign of the union between Christ and His Church. While the husband is the head of the family as Jesus is the Head of the Church, spouses are both called to be subject to one another for Christ (CCC1642).

- 7 Can the knight achieve his destiny without the lady? (Explain your answer.)

No, because with no one to protect and defend, a knight has no purpose.

- 8 Can the lady achieve her destiny without the knight? (Explain your answer)

No, she cannot realize all the dimensions of her womanhood without the love and protection of her knight.

- 9 To what extent is the contrast between the sexes and the roles they play part of what makes the paintings beautiful?

Allow discussion, but help students see that the paintings would be far less beautiful and iconic without the interplay of two distinct sexes.

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Remember that your goal is not to win an argument or change the person's mind, but to understand what they are going through so you can offer support. With prudence, you may gently ask questions that may prompt deeper thinking. For example, "If all 'trans women' are women, are all women 'trans women?'" Or, "If the body does not determine sex, how does changing one's body affirm it?"

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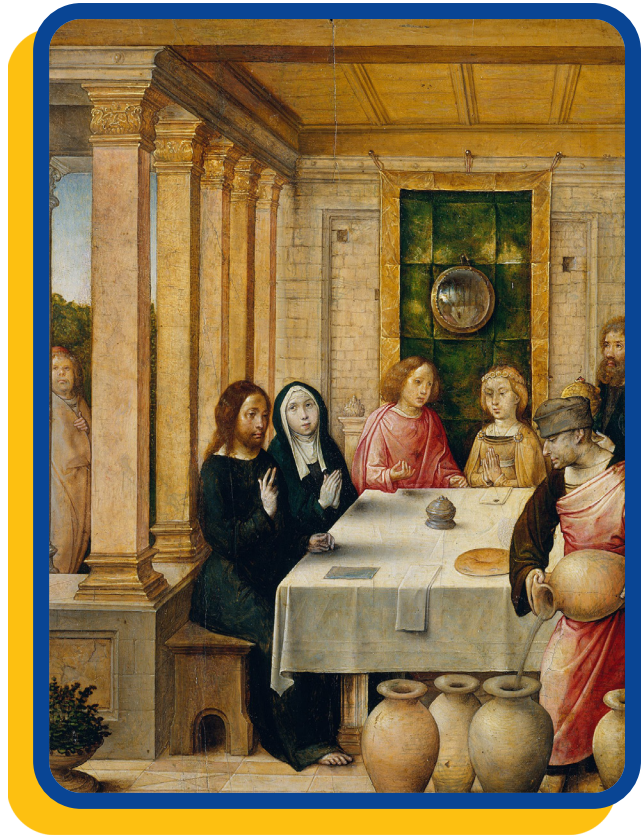
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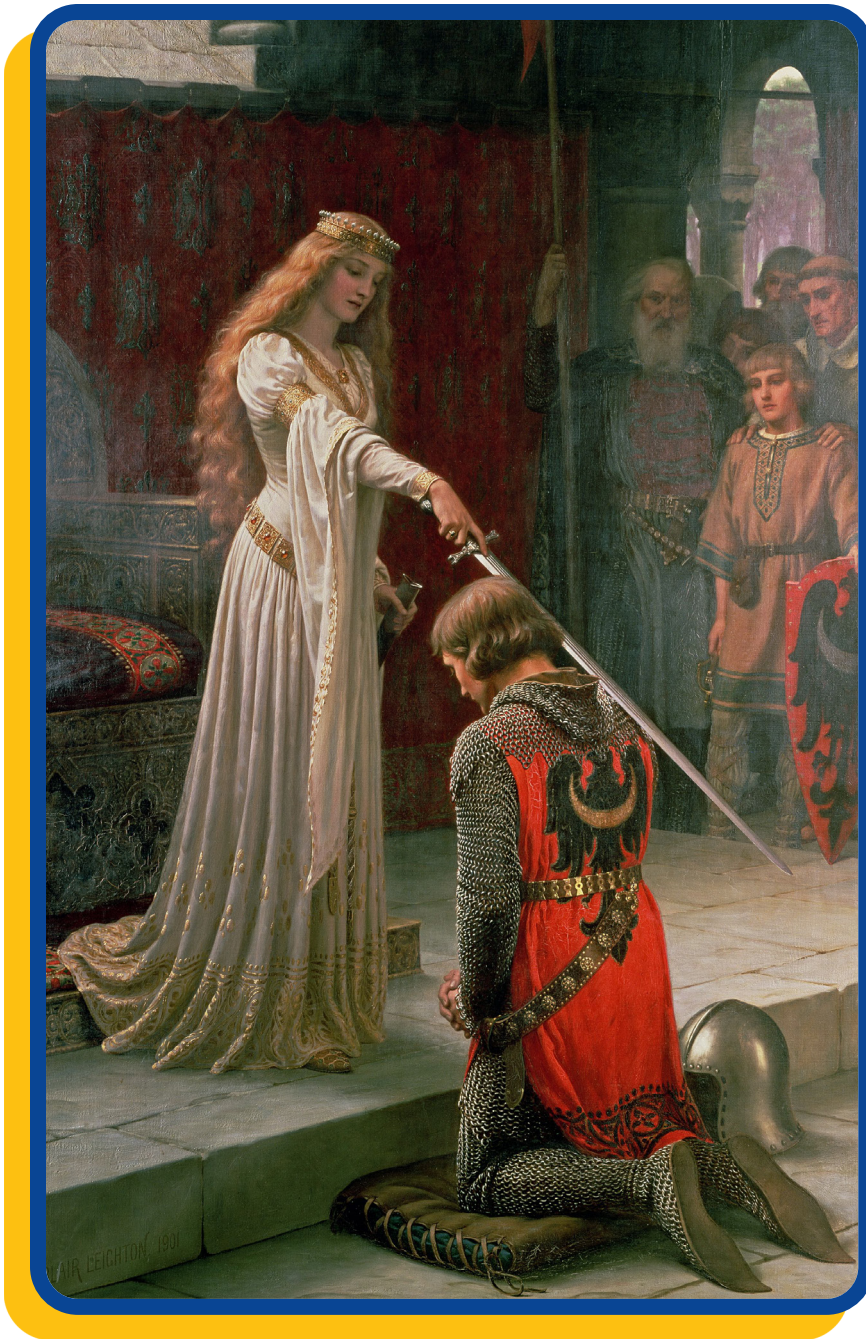
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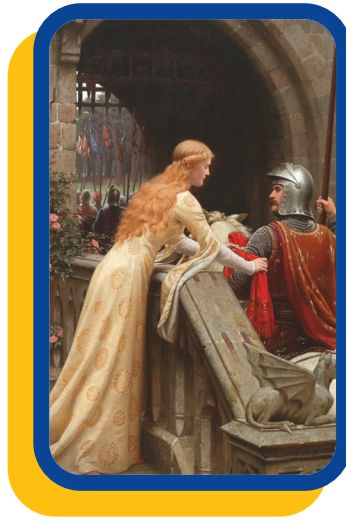
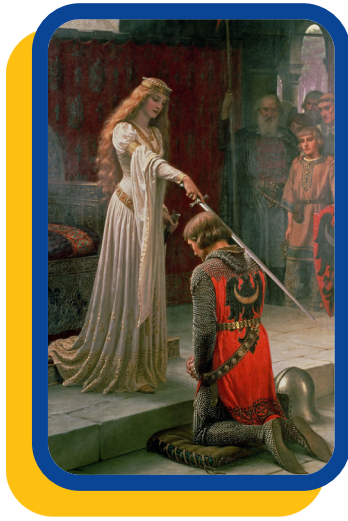
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