*Le Morte d’Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory – Reading Questions

1. Arthur has two dreams/visions. What is the significance of the first one? **He dreams he is seated on a chair on a scaffold; the scaffold overturns and he falls into dark water where he is attacked by serpents, worms, and beasts**
2. What is the second dream/vision? **Gawain appears and is joined by a group of women**
3. Why is Gawain surrounded by women? **They are women he fought for in the past**
4. What is Gawain’s message for Arthur? **Do not battle Mordred; make a treaty to delay battle for a month and a day; wait on Lancelot to arrive to help**
5. Who delivers Arthur’s orders concerning the peace treaty? (2 people) **Sir Bedivere and Sir Lucan**
6. What does the “treatise” promise to Mordred? **Mordred would get Cornwall and Kent, then all of England after Arthur’s death**
7. Who is Mordred? **Arthur’s (illegitimate) son**
8. Why does the battle break out? **A knight is stung by an adder (snake); when he draws his sword to kill it, battle breaks out**
9. Explain the significance of your answer to #8. **Both Arthur and Mordred told their men to attack at the sign of a drawn sword (neither trusted the other)**
10. What does Sir Lucan mean when he says that Mordred is “unhappy”? **Mordred is unlucky; nothing good will come if Arthur attacks him**
11. What does “swough” mean in the following statement: “And noble King Arthur fell in a swough to the earth”? **he fainted from his injuries/wounds**
12. Why does Sir Lucan want to take the dying Arthur to a town? **He doesn’t want him to be attacked by robbers/looters**
13. Who does Arthur regret missing as he dies? **Lancelot**
14. Which of Arthur’s knights dies before he does? **Sir Lucan (his guts fall out, his heart bursts)**
15. What is Malory’s description of Excalibur? **It is Arthur’s noble sword, it is decorated with precious stones**
16. How does Sir Bedivere disobey Arthur? Why does he disobey Arthur? **He does not throw Excalibur in the water; he thinks nothing good would come of throwing the sword, so he hides it**
17. Think about Malory’s use of the number three. What significance does it have? **It fits with patterned events (characteristic of a legend)**
18. How does Bedivere show (not tell) Arthur that he loves him and is devoted to him? Be specific. Quote the line. **“Then Bedivere took the king on his back and so went with him to the water’s side.”**
19. Of what epic poem does this remind you? **Beowulf; Wiglaf stayed with him while he battled the dragon**
20. What is a barge? **A boat**
21. Describe the women on the barge: **they were dressed in black hoods; they wept and shrieked when they saw Arthur**
22. What does Arthur tell Bedivere to do to comfort himself? **Do the best he can and trust in himself**
23. Whom does Bedivere meet at the chapel? **A hermit (the former bishop of Canterbury)**
24. Why does Bedivere “swoon” or faint? **He sees Arthur’s grave in the chapel**
25. What does Bedivere say he will do the rest of his life? **He will remain at the chapel and pray for Arthur**
26. Who were the three queens on the barge? **Morgan le Fay (Arthur’s sister), queen of North Wales, and queen of the Waste Lands**
27. Who takes Excalibur and shakes it three times? **An arm and hand that rises out of the water**
28. What is the significance of Arthur’s tombstone? **“Here lies Arthur, the once and future king.” – hints that Arthur may return one day to rule as king**
29. According to the text, what happens to Guinevere? **She becomes a nun, wore white and black clothing, she took penance as a sinful woman, she was never happy, she lived in fasting and prayers**