

Abstract

Geoffrey of Monmouth claimed his purpose for writing *Historia regum Britanniae* was to record a history of the British kings and their great deeds. On the surface, his book is indeed a chronicle detailing the reigns of several important kings and glossing over many more. However, below the surface, Geoffrey includes layers of Christian text to motivate his audience to avoid vice. To clue his readers into the Christian meaning, Geoffrey makes use of shared beliefs, such as that vices should be avoided, that a king's behavior affects his people, that disease can be a manifestation of sin, and that God is involved in the rise and fall of nations. Also to add in additional Christian layers, Geoffrey uses Biblical language and makes several allusions to Biblical characters, events, and teachings.

Though a history, Geoffrey's text follows the pattern of a narrative which functions as a means to pass on a moral meaning and to preserve a society's beliefs. Geoffrey chooses the kings and events that will best express his moral message and show the audience the need to live a moral life. He also follows a narrative pattern in constructing a plot that invites the audience into the story. His plot comes through his exempla of the kings, and with these stories, Geoffrey exhibits the dangers of indulging in vice because of the punishment and suffering that come as a consequence of sin. By the end of *HRB*, not only are the kings sinning but the Britons are as well, and their sins eventually lead to more severe punishment. With all this layering of shared beliefs, Christian text, and narrative form, Geoffrey is emphasizing the need for people to avoid vice and is hoping to inspire them to do so.