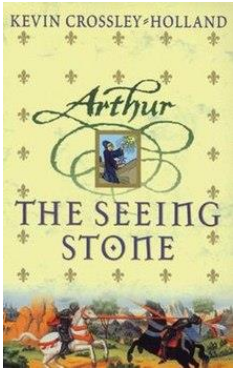


**An extract from 'The Seeing Stone', an historical novel by Keven Crossley-Holland**

Tumber hill! It's my clamber-and-tumble-and-beech-and-bramble hill! Sometimes, when I'm standing on the top, I fill my lungs with air and I shout. I shout.

In front of me, I can see half the world. Far down almost underneath my feet, I can see our manor house, the scarlet flag dancing, the row of beehives beyond the orchard, the stream shining. I can see Gatty's cottage and count how many people are working in the two fields. Then I look out beyond Caldicot. I gaze deep into thick Pike forest and away into the wilderness. That's where the raiders would come from, and where Wales begins. That's where the world starts to turn blue.

When I'm standing on top of Tumber hill, I sometimes think of all the people, all the generations who grew up on this ground, and grew into this ground, their days and years... My Welsh grandmother Nain says the sounds trees make are the voices of the dead, and when I listen to the beech trees, they sound like whispering spirits – they're my great-uncles and great-great-aunts, my great-great-great-grandparents, green again and guiding me.



**Second extract from 'The Seeing Stone', a novel by Keven Crossley-Holland**

"It's not up to pages to play among the cowpats. You shouldn't humble yourself. You know that," said my father.

"No one else lifted a finger", I said. "Wat Harelip and Giles and Joan, they all kept shouting, but they didn't help."

"What you did was wrong", said my father, "but for the right reasons. I know you were being loyal to Gatty, and you were extremely brave. No one wants to go into a field and face two angry bulls. But I want you to understand: each one of us here in this manor of Caldicot has his own duties. What are your duties?"

"To learn to tilt and parry and throw and wrestle and practice all the other Yard-skills; to dress my lord, and serve at table, and carve; to read and to write".

"Exactly," said my father. No one can learn these skills for you. In just the same way, Hum and Gatty and Wat Harelip and everyone in the manor have their own duties. They must be accountable for them – to me, and to God."

"Yes, father".

"In fact, it's the same for each man and woman and child on middle-earth: each has his own place, his own work, his own obligations. If we all start taking one another's places, where will we be?"

"Is it wrong, then," I asked my father, to do what your gut tells you to do?"

"Well," replied my father, "our instincts never lie to us, but they do sometimes instruct us to do things we should not do. And your tongue, Arthur, often says things it should not say". My father walked right round the chamber, and poked with his left forefinger at one of the little horn-window-slats which had slipped out of position. "The next time Serle and I go hunting," he said, "you will stay at home. That is your punishment, and the end of the matter."