

“Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” vs. Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

By codysheddy, Vancouver, WA

Romances are now commonly seen as just love stories, but the original meaning of a romance is the story of a near perfect hero who goes on a quest. Even though all romances contain the many of the same elements, often they differ completely by the way author writes the story. “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade show many romantic similari that include: an evil enemy, supernatural elements, near perfect heroes, and female figures; but the differences are how they ea face their tests, and how they accomplish their quests.

First off, both Indiana Jones and Sir Gawain face an evil enemy, which is not just an actual person or entity, as much as their ow personal character flaws. Indiana Jones has a real evil enemy which starts out being the Nazis, but eventually he realizes that h.. perseverance, that is almost blind and overpowering. this becomes an evil that he has to overcome. Towards the end of Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade he is reaching for the grail and is in danger of falling into an abyss and dying and he says, “I can get it. I can almost reach it, Dad...” And Dr. Jones, his father, says: “Indiana... let it go.” (“Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) - Memorable Quotes.”) Because he decided to leave the grail, his dad was able to pull him up out of the abyss, they managed to escape and live. But the strong perseverance almost cost him his life and it wasn’t worth it just to get the grail. Like in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Sir Gawain also starts out with an enemy, the Green Knight, who eventually becomes just an object to reveal the true enemy, a cowardly and disloyal attitude. “Cursed be cowardice and covetous both, villainy and vice that destroy all virtue!” (“from “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”.”) says Sir Gawain when he realized that the true enemy is “cowardice and covetous.” The fact that both stories contain a physical evil enemy and also a character flaw which becomes an evil they must overcome, is a similarity between “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.

Secondly, the romances contain supernatural elements such as: the Holy Grail, and a mysterious knight who gets beheaded and still lives. In “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” there is a knight dressed totally in green, the Green Knight, who comes into the castle when King Arthur and his knights are sitting at the round table and allows Sir Gawain to swing at his neck with an axe if the Green Knight can swing at his neck with the axe a year later. Sir Gawain agrees and later in the story the Green Knight says: “My head fell off at my feet, yet I never flickered.” (“from “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”.”) The Green Knight had his head chopped off and it didn’t even harm him, he just picked up his head and rode off. In Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Indiana meets an old knight who warns him about the mythical Grail and says: “But choose wisely, for while the true Grail will bring you life, the false Grail will take it from you.” (“Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) - Memorable Quotes.”) What the knight meant by that is that while the real Grail will give you everlasting life, one of the false grails will make you die quickly. Both Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” contain supernatural elements that show they are romances.

Another similarity between both Indiana Jones and Sir Gawain is the fact that they both are near-perfect heroes and have character flaws that they deal with in the story. Indiana Jones is a near-perfect hero who is facing an evil enemy and his father refers to both of them being good guys in the story when he says: “My son, we're pilgrims in an unholy land.” (“Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) - Memorable Quotes.”) Because they are pilgrims in an unholy land that means that they are the guys doing the right thing. In “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” Sir Gawain is a near-perfect hero but has a definite character flaw. The Green Knight says to him: “I’m convinced you’re the finest man that ever walked this earth.” (“from “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”.”) This was right after Sir Gawain’s test, which he failed, but despite his character flaw, the Green Knight still says that to him. That is how Sir Gawain and Indiana Jones are both near perfect heroes.

Yet another similarity is that both Indiana Jones and Sir Gawain deal with a female figure that is somehow part of their test. Indiana Jones has a difficult test because he and the female figure, Elsa, both want to keep the grail, but cannot because the knight told them not to take it past the seal. Indiana says: “Elsa don’t cross the seal. The knight warned us not to take the grail from here!” (“Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) - Memorable Quotes.”) Indiana could have just said, “OK, Elsa. We got it, lets go!”, but he told her not to take it past the seal and that shows that the female figure was important in his test. In “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”, there is a female figure who is also part of his test. The female figure in this story is also an important part of Sir Gawain’s test. She is the wife of a lord who Sir Gawain stays with, but the lord is actually the Green Knight who is using his wife to test Sir Gawain. “My own wife gave it to you, as I ought to know. I know, too, of your kisses and all your words and my wife’s advances, for I myself arranged them.” (“from “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”.”) This is where the Green Knight tells Sir Gawain of how he used his wife to test his loyalty. This shows that both romantic stories have female figures and how they are involved in the testing of the heroes.

So even though Indiana Jones’ test and Sir Gawain’s test both involve female figures and are tests of their a part of their character, only Indiana passes his test. Sir Gawain has a very difficult test, which he almost passes, except for the third part of it. The Green Knight explains it to him: “And so for the first two days, mere feints, nothing more severe. A man who’s true to his word, There’s nothing he needs to fear; You failed me, though, on the third Exchange, so I’ve tapped you here.” (“from “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”.”) The Green Knight was telling Sir Gawain of how he passed the first two tests by giving him the kisses he received, but failed the third by not giving him the sash that his wife gave him. But unlike the Sir Gawain, Indiana Jones passes his central test. He realizes that the grail is not the most important thing and then gives his father his other hand, and is pulled to safety. “I can get it. I can almost reach it, Dad...” Then Dr. Jones says: “Indiana... let it go.” (“Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) - Memorable Quotes.”) That is where Indiana passes his test, when he turns from the grail and gives his father his other hand so he can be pulled to safety. So even though both Romantic heroes did have central tests of their character, only Indiana passed his.

Finally their quests differ in that Indiana starts to look for his father than for the grail, but Sir Gawain is just looking for the Green Knight to let him take a swing at his neck. Indiana Jones goes on the quest to find his father and to find what his father was looking for. In a certain part of the movie Indiana is telling Elsa, quite angrily, about their quest so far: “Listen. Since I’ve met you I’ve

nearly been incinerated, drowned, shot at, and chopped into fish bait. We're caught in the middle of something sinister here, my guess is Dad found out more than he was looking for and until I'm sure, I'm going to continue to do things the way I think they should be done." ("Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) - Memorable Quotes.") That sounds very dangerous and he seems quite unsure of what exactly he is looking for. But on the other hand Sir Gawain has figured out where he is going and he knows he has to be there by a certain day. "You've timed your travel, my friend, as a true man should. You recall the terms of the contract drawn up between us: at this time a year ago you took your chances." ("from "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight".") Sir Gawain knows exactly what he faces unlike Indiana Jones, who has a new danger around every corner. That is how Indiana Jones' quest and Sir Gawain's quest differ from each other.

So even though there are many similarities, such as an evil enemy, supernatural elements, and female figures, there are also differences. Both have totally different tests, and different quests. Indiana Jones and Sir Gawain both face an evil enemy who is actually just an object to reveal the real evil; which are their character flaws. There are supernatural elements in both Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" such as the Holy Grail that gives eternal life and a Green Knight who gets his head chopped off and isn't even harmed. In both Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," Indiana and Sir Gawain are near perfect heroes, that have a character flaw that they have to deal with in the story. There are female figures, such as Elsa in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and the Green Knight's wife in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," that are important in the central test of both Indiana and Sir Gawain. But one of the differences between the two stories that even though both heroes have female figures and other things in their tests, only Indiana passes his test, while Sir Gawain is disloyal and fails his. The last difference I explained was the differences in Indiana's and Sir Gawain's quests. Indiana's quest is unpredictable and he is unsure what he is looking for, but Sir Gawain's quest knows exactly where he is going and knows exactly what, or who, he is looking for. In spite of the similarities and differences in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" both stories contain elements that allow them to be classified as romances.

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"Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989) - Memorable Quotes." The Internet Movie Database (IMDb). Web. 18 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097576/quotes>>.