

Faerie Queene

Book I

[HOLINESS]

Canto 1

Red Crosse Knight, Una ("Truth")
and a Dwarf ("Common Sense") on a
plain

(storm)

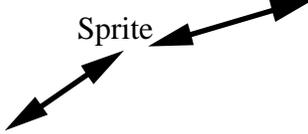


Wandering ("error")
Wandering Wood & Error's Cave



The Hermit (Archimago / "Hypocrisy") and the false hermitage

Sprite



Morpheus' Cave

Creates false Una & sends her to RCK

Canto II

Creates false Squire
who sleeps with false Una
RCK is shown this "betrayal"

RCK & Dwarf flee

Archimago departs
as false RCK

Una discovers RCK missing and follows

Meets "Sans foy" ("Without faith")
& kills him. Sansfoy's lady, "Fidessa"
("Faith," who is really Duessa, or
"Duplicity"), joins up with RCK

They met Fradubio ("Brother Doubt"), who
was transformed into a tree by Duessa, as
was his lady, Fraelissa ("Frailty")

Canto III

Canto III

Una meets the Lion



Abessa ("Apart from being,"
"Abness"), daughter
of Corceca ("blindness of heart")



The lion subdues the thief (dismembers him), whose name
is "Kirkrapine" ("church-raper"); Abessa and Corceca
flee, desirous of revenge on Una

Corceca meets
Archimago, who is
disguised as RCK,
and tells him
where to find Una

Una encounters Archimago and believes
he is her RCK



Archimago/RCK fights Sansloy ("Without
Law"); Sansloy pierces the red-crossed shield,
which lacks the protective virtue of the true
RCK; accuses Archimago of having killed his
brother, Sansfoy, whom the real RCK has
killed; he takes off Archimago's helmet,
revealing who he is; Sansloy kills the lion

Canto IV

RCK & Duessa come to a "goodly
heape," i.e., the "House of Pride," which
is built on a hill of shifting sands. Pride
is the daughter of Pluto & Proserpina;
men call her "Lucifera," "that made her
selfe a Queene"; her coach is drawn by
the other six deadly sins, who are
whipped by Satan; on returning to the
palace, they encounter Sansjoy
("Without Joy"), who seeks revenge for
his elder brother's death; the Queen
interrupts and arranges a formal joust;
Duessa throws her lot in with Sansjoy



Canto V

RCK defeats Sansjoy, who disappears in a black cloud before he can be killed; Duessa sheds "crocodile tears"; Duessa forms an alliance with Night and returns to the Palace of Pride; RCK and the Dwarf leave the palace

Canto VI

Sansloy overtakes Una and leads her into a forest where he attempts to rape her; a band of fauns and satyrs rescue her; Satyrane comes upon Una and helps her escape the satyrs

They meet a pilgrim, Archimago in disguise, who tells them that RCK is dead; they ask where his killer is and are told where to find Sansloy

Satyrane confronts Sansloy with the accusation, which he denies, and they fight

Una, fearing the lusts of Sansloy, flees; Achimago (as pilgrim) follows

Canto VII

Duessa finds RCK sitting beside a fountain; he drinks and the fountain enfeebles him

Canto VII
(cont.)

↓

The giant Orgoglio comes upon RCK in his weakened condition; he is about to batter him into dust until Duessa intervenes and offers a deal: make him your slave and me your mistress

↓

The dwarf, in despair, leaves; he meets Una "on the way," fleeing from Sansloy; the dwarf fills Una in on all that has occurred; Una resolves to find RCK alive or dead

↓

She meets a knight (Arthur) and his squire; discussion about faith, reason, and the flesh; Una tells Arthur that her parents were kidnapped by a dragon; she tells what has happened to her and to RCK; they all resolve to find RCK and the dwarf leads the way

Canto VIII

Arthur defeats the giant, Orgoglio, and the many-headed beast; Duessa flees, but the Squire captures her

↓

Arthur siezes the keys of Ignaro ("Ignorance"), keeper of the giant's castle, and releases RCK from the dungeon

↓

Una and RCK are reunited; Duessa is stripped and the "face of falsehood" exposed; they let her go to wander naked in the wilderness



Canto IX

Arthur reveals his history: he was raised by Faeries and tutored by Merlin, who told him he was a king's son. Like Troilus, Arthur had scorned love, only to be "converted". He dreams he sleeps with the "Queene of Faeries," whom now seeks



They exchange gifts



Arthur leaves in search of the Faerie Queen



They meet Trevisan, who tells of the Cave of Despair, where he and his companion, Terwin, have been lead by Despair, who tries to convince them to take their lives; Trevisan fled, leaving Terwin



RCK and Una agree to return with him to the cave where they find Terwin dead; Despair encourages RCK to kill himself; Una rescues him from death; Despair tries to kill himself but cannot



Canto X

Una brings RCK to the House of Holiness, inhabited by Caelia ("Heavenly") and her three daughters: Fidelia ("Faith"), Speranza ("Hope"), and Charissa ("Charity"). The porter is Humilitá ("Humility"). Also present are a franklin named "Zele" and a squire named "Reverence"



They are fed and comforted by Obedience; Fidelia instructs RCK; She and Speranza teach him to abhor the "wretched world" and to loath "mortal life"; Speranza's silver anchor prevents his sins from causing him to forget Fidelia's teachings

Canto X (cont.)

A physician named Patience cures RCK's desire to hasten his departure from this sinful world



Penance, Remorse, and Repentance lend a hand



Charissa completes his instruction; Mercie guides him on the "narrow way"; they meet the seven beadsman (representing the seven corporal acts of mercy)



They continue on the Way and meet a hermit named Heavenly Contemplation; RCK fasts and prays and is then led to the highest mountain (Sinai), from which he vies the new Jerusalem; he is told he will be a saint and will be called St. George, the patron saint of England; he learns he was born of a Saxon king and kidnapped by faeries; RCK departs, rejoins Una, and leaves the House of Holiness



Canto XI

They go to the tower where Una's parents are kept prisoner by a dragon; RCK fights the dragon, is at first defeated and falls by a well (the Well of Life); they rejoin the battle and again he is defeated, this time falling by the Tree of Life; again they fight, and the dragon is defeated



Canto XII

A celebration is held. RCK and Una cannot yet marry because he must return to serve the Faerie Queen for six years in her fight against the Pagan King



A messenger (Archimago in disguise) intrudes, bringing a letter from Fidessa (Duessa), claiming that RCK had pledged to marry her; RCK reveals that she is in fact the false Duessa and has no claim; Archimago is unmasked and imprisoned. RCK and Una are formally betrothed and he leaves to serve the Faerie Queen

Book I is organized on the principle of the moral dialectic, in which the symbols of virtue are parodied by their vicious or demonic counterparts. For example:

Archimago's beads		Corceca's beads Beadsmen's beads
Archimago's fountain		Sansloy's fountain RCK's fountain (Well of Life)
Wandering wood		enchanted trees Tree of Life
House of Pride		House of Holiness
Error Duessa's beast	the dragon	the dragon on Arthur's helmet Fidelia's serpent
Duessa's cup of enchantment		Fidelia's cup (the sacramental cup of communion)
Seven Deadly Sins		Seven Beadsmen
Courtly lovers: Sansloy, Lechery, RCK with Duessa		RCK & Una
Archimago as hermit in the dale		Hermit on the Hill of Heavenly Contemplation

The Faerie Queene combines the qualities of romance and epic and employs the method of allegory. On one level, it can be read as a straightforward medieval romance and the reader must engage the poem on this level first. Spencer consciously employed the method of allegory, however, and thus the poem also invites readings on other levels as well. As Hugh Maclean notes: "as leader of the British people, [Queen Elizabeth] recalls (and represents) the role and achievement of Arthur; as leader of the English race, she carries forward the role of St. George; as 'governor' or the Anglican Establishment, serving the purposes of God, she directs a nation in the light of Christ's example" (431).