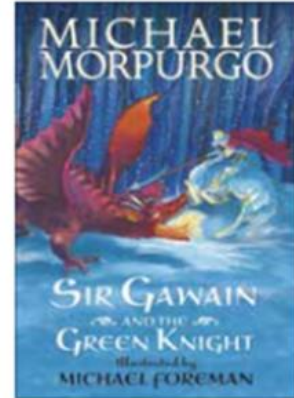


michael morpurgo

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight



Sir Gawain and the Green Knight – Dressed and Armoured

'The next morning, after a sleepless night filled with fears and doubts, Gawain rose early and called for his servants to fetch him his clothes and armour. They put on first his doublet and fur-lined cape, which they fastened tight around his neck against the cold. They strapped on his armour, all brightly burnished, until he was covered in steel – thighs, arms, even his hands. Over it all they hung a heavy scarlet surcoat, wonderfully embroidered, and around this at his waist they tied a silken swordbelt of peacock blue. With his gold spurs at his heels and his sword in its sheath he was as ready as he would ever be to face any foe.'

From his room Gawain went straight to the chapel to say Mass, and then at once to the courtyard to Gringolet, his waiting warhorse, who was as magnificently dressed and armoured as his master. Once he had settled in the saddle the servants handed him up his helmet. And what a helmet it was. Padded on the inside, it was polished and jewelled on the outside. The neckguard was strong enough to save him from even the most terrible of blows to the head. Once he had buckled on his helmet he was handed his shield, with his own coat of arms embossed upon it. This was a gold pentangle, a five-pointed star, each point representing a virtue to which any true knight must aspire: loving kindness, integrity, chivalry, loyalty and holiness. And etched on the back of the shield, where he could see it at a glance if ever his courage failed him, was the face of the blessed Virgin Mary herself.'

(Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Chapter 4, Pages 52-54)

Pippa Goodhart

RAVEN BOY



RAVEN BOY – Chapter One

There were sounds from up above – moans and another thump – Nick and Seth glanced upward. Seth's laughter stopped.

'You don't think it might be the plague do you Nick? There's more dying of it everyday they say. We've nailed up a family in Fenchurch Street now and I saw a man yesterday fall where he stood and none to help him. You don't think.....'

'What's this talk of the plague, Seth Binder? In my house? Never! And don't you go spreading that gossip!.....'

.....I fear that the you-know-what has come amongst us, Nicholas. The plague into my own house! Said Mistress Jenkins. 'I want your mother out of my house, and nobody to know of it, or they'll come and nail us all in to die of it. You must take your mother away from here, Nicholas! I beg you!'

...'I want to go home! Said Mercy. Home; where Mother lay dying. Where the searcher would come in his long black gown and bird-head mask to swoop up the stairs and loom over Mother and summon the death cart and the men with long hooked poles.....'