Discussion Questions:

Knight of the Cart

1. What set(s) of virtues does Chrétien extol? Which vices does he most strongly condemn? Are there different sets for men and for women? Any overlap with Prudentius' protagonists in the Psychomachia?

2. The Knight of the Cart is a so-called Arthurian romance. What is Arthurian about it? Compare the role of Arthur in this romance to that of Charlemagne in the Song of Roland.

3. What is the difference in motivation between the knights in the Song of Roland and the knights in Chrétien? How do the characteristics of romance affect the status of knighthood?

4. How does courtly love resemble a religion in Chrétien? What are the implications of this idea? Does the narrator ever condemn it? What is the role of Christianity in the romance?

5. Humiliation is a recurring theme for the knight of the cart. Does it show us pure, virtuous selflessness? Is it a parody? Or perhaps a commentary on the consequences of adulterous love? Do irony and humor undercut the courtly love material?

6. Throughout Knight of the Cart, the characters unexpectedly and/or purposefully resort to silence, or do not hear what is being said, or very self-consciously uses words. What do these moments add to the romance?

Cligés

1. Cligés offers a number of references to other narratives, via examples such as Ganelon (p. 136), Medea (159), Lancelot (181--whom Cligés actually fights), St. Paul (188), Trojan war characters (187), Solomon (195), and especially Tristan and Isolde (156, 161, 187, 188). Why does the author include so many varied references? What can we learn from Chrétien and his audience from these references?

2. What role do knowledge and learning play in Cligés?