# Source 3 – Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy

## Procedures:

Read/listen to the following sources and answer the questions below.

**“A Mother’s Memories” from the "Commemorating Camelot: Three Women Who Shaped JFK’s Legacy" Site Bulletin.**

Joseph and Rose Kennedy moved to 83 Beals Street in Brookline, Massachusetts following their wedding in 1914. Their second child, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, was born in the home on May 29, 1917. Mrs. Kennedy restored the home to its appearance on the day of his birth and donated it to the National Park Service as a memorial to him. In recent years, the site receives around 30,000 visitors annually.

Mrs. Kennedy hoped that visitors would learn that President Kennedy’s political ideals were rooted to his earliest experiences. Even before her children began formal schooling, Mrs. Kennedy used domestic spaces and activities to educate and prepare them for public service. She filled their home with objects that encouraged their interest in geography, music, and art. She also structured family mealtimes with conversations and games that helped them learn about historic figures and current events. When her children were sick, she read stories to them with characters that served as proper role models.

One of the books Mrs. Kennedy chose to read to her children with this goal in mind was *King Arthur and His Knights*. She recalls that it became one of John’s particular favorites. It not only provided the future President with exciting adventures to imagine while he recovered from various illnesses; it also gave him a set of moral principles to value from an early age. King Arthur exhibited great courage, valued service to others above self-interest, and exercised diplomacy and negotiation during his reign. As he grew older, John F. Kennedy would strive to emulate this mythical hero as he took on positions of political leadership. He also developed a fondness for the Lerner and Loewe musical *Camelot* that debuted in 1960, the same year he was elected to the nation’s highest office.

When Mrs. Kennedy returned to the President’s birthplace, she placed a copy of *King Arthur* in the nursery to signal its importance to her late son.

## [Mrs. Kennedy Audio Tour: Living Room](https://jofi.oncell.com/en/2-living-room-70361.html) can be found at <https://jofi.oncell.com/en/2-living-room-70361.html>

Duration: 3 minutes, 29 seconds

Audio Transcript

Welcome to our home. Mr. Kennedy and I bought and moved into this house when we were married in 1914. Our eldest son was born at Hull, Massachusetts, a summer resort, but our next three children, including the president, were born here, and this house holds many happy memories. Life was so much simpler then. Here we had space and air, for there were no houses across the street or to the right of this one. At first there were few automobiles and the trolley lines were a fifteen-minute walk away. I shall try to point out to you some of the things as we go through the house that were important in our lives. Since the living room in the days before radio and television was the place for the family to be together, we shall start here. We spent a lot of time in this room in the evening. Mr. Kennedy was president of a bank and this was his one opportunity to read the newspaper or his favorite detective stories. He would sit in that red chair by the gate-leg table. We all read *The Boston Transcript* in the evenings in those days. Papers only cost a penny. Usually I would sit in the wing chair there by the table opposite him. I can’t see that chair without remembering the holes in the children’s stockings. They wore knickers then and the boys knee stockings always had holes in them. They had to be darned once or twice a week When the children were ready for bed and had said their prayers, they would come to the living room and play for a little while before we put them to bed. Usually after the children were tucked in, Mr. Kennedy and I would take a long walk. It was an hour we both enjoyed. I spent a good deal of the time reading to the children from books carefully selected from a list submitted by the school twice a year or from the Women’s Industrial Union. I remember that I would make no engagements outside in the evening so that I could be with the children to help them with their school work, to doctor their colds, or to find out what activities they had been interested in during the day. The piano was a wedding gift and at Christmas, with the tree over there by the south window, I would play, and we would all sing Christmas carols. The children did not do too well with their piano lessons. Radio was a new thing then and they said that people wouldn’t want to listen to them play when they could hear the same songs on the radio. The pictures are copies of famous paintings I had studied in the European galleries. It gave me great pleasure to have these copies in my home and I thought it an inspiration for the children to grow up with them. Now shall we go upstairs to the master bedroom? On the way you may want to take notice of the old-fashioned telephone in the hall.

## Questions:

How did Rose Kennedy’s memories shape the re-creation of President Kennedy’s birthplace?

What items were in the Kennedy household that Rose Kennedy hoped would influence her children? Why were mealtimes so important to this family?

Which book did Mrs. Kennedy highlight as being particularly influential in the life of a young John F. Kennedy? Why do you think she chose to highlight this book?

## Additional Resources:

[Commemorating Camelot: Three Women Who Shaped JFK’s Legacy](https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/commemorating-camelot-three-women-who-shaped-jfk-s-legacy.htm#Jackie) is available through the National Park Service:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/commemorating-camelot-three-women-who-shaped-jfk-s-legacy.htm>

[Mrs. Kennedy's Full Audio Tour](https://jofi.oncell.com/en/rose-kennedy-house-tour-104120.html) is available through OnCell:

<https://jofi.oncell.com/en/rose-kennedy-house-tour-104120.html>