

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Prince Caspian by C.S. Lewis

Book Information

C.S. Lewis, Prince Caspian
Quiz Number: 634
HarperTrophy, 2002
ISBN 0-06-447105-5; LCCN
238 Pages
Book Level: 5.7
Interest Level: MG

Prince Caspian and his army of Talking Beasts conquer the Telmarines. Book #2

Topics: Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; Series, Chronicles of Narnia

Main Characters

Aslan a huge lion who is the most powerful and magical being in Narnia

Caspian the good and rightful king of Narnia, who is fighting to regain his throne

Cornelius Caspian's half dwarf, half-human tutor learned in the ways of Old Narnia

Edmund the younger of the two boys, who tends to be impulsive

King Miraz Caspian's evil uncle, who is attempting to kill him in order to keep the throne

Lucy Peter's youngest sister, who sees Aslan most often

Peter the oldest of four English siblings who were once Narnian Kings and Queens

Susan the second oldest of the children, who tends to be practical and somewhat critical

Trumpkin a loyal dwarf who helps the children find Caspian and fights bravely

Vocabulary

bivouac a temporary and mobile camp often used by soldiers

career a fast, uncontrolled motion

cordial a thick and often sweet liquid that sometimes has medicinal benefits

dotard someone who is old and feeble

lists the perimeter of an area in which a duel is to take place

naiads mythical spirits that inhabit the water

Synopsis

Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy are English siblings who are on their way to boarding school when they are suddenly pulled by a strange force back to Narnia, a magical world in which they had many earlier adventures as Kings and Queens. Although they do not recognize their surroundings at first, the children soon realize that time has passed much faster in Narnia than in England and that they are in the midst of the ruins of the castle from which they once ruled. As they begin to look for other Narnians, they meet a Dwarf named Trumpkin, whom they rescue from execution at the hands of the Telmarines, a people who conquered the Narnians in the past and still presently rule Narnia. Trumpkin tells them how the evil King Miraz has usurped the throne from his nephew Caspian, the rightful King. Trumpkin also informs them that after Caspian fled from the castle to escape from King Miraz, the young prince had raised an army of the Old Narnians such as Talking Animals, dwarves, giants, and magicians and was presently engaged in a battle with the King and his Telmarine forces. The children realize that it was for the purpose of aiding Caspian in coming to power that they are in Narnia, as Caspian had pulled them there by blowing on a magical hunting horn that always brought help.

Their trek to Caspian's camp is complicated by the fact that the passage of time has caused many changes in the land that they once knew so well. However, with the help of Aslan, a tremendous lion who is far greater than the Kings and Queens, they reach Caspian in time to help him stop a mutiny that one of the Black Dwarves attempts to execute. To prevent more bloodshed, Peter challenges King Miraz to settle the matter in a one-to-one combat. Peter finally beats the evil king, but King Miraz's treacherous advisors provoke the Telmarines to attack the Narnians in spite of their agreement. The Narnians emerge victorious from the battle after Aslan comes forth with an army of forest spirits, which so frightens the enemy that they flee. After a

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great celebration in which Caspian is knighted and crowned king, Aslan offers the Telmarines the opportunity to return to the land from which they had originally come, an island back in the children's world, and they reluctantly accept. Aslan sends the Telmarines to the island and the children home to England through a magical door, with the promise that although Peter and Susan cannot return because they are too old, Edmund and Lucy have more Narnian adventures in store for them.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

What events lead up to Nikabrik's proposal to call up the White Witch?

Nikabrik does not believe that Aslan even exists but thinks that he is just a legend. He has never seen proof that he could be real or that he will help them. In the course of the battle, King Miraz's forces heavily damage their army, and many of the dwarves are injured because Caspian's battle plan does not succeed as he had hoped it would. He does not see the use of waiting for help any longer because nothing has happened yet, and he wants to call on a different source of power. He thinks the White Witch is more powerful than Aslan because she ruled Narnia longer and because she was able to kill Aslan.

Literary Analysis

What characteristics does Caspian exhibit that will make him a good king? Give examples.

Caspian is patient and fair, as is shown in the way he deals with the Bulgy Bears, the Giant, and Nikabrik. He is willing to listen to the ideas of others and looks to those who are wiser than he, such as Cornelius, for advice. Caspian is not threatened by the creatures of Old Narnia but, instead, is confident enough to believe he can live in harmony with them. His fighting in the battle shows that he is brave, and his respect for the members of his band, such as the mice and bears, demonstrates that he is a kind and gentle person.

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Inferential Comprehension

How are the Red and Black Dwarves different? How are they alike?

The Black Dwarves have black beards and hair that is thick and stiff like horse-hair. They are more suspicious, selfish, and prone to violence as a solution to problems than the Red Dwarves. They are also closely associated with Black Magic. The reader can see these traits in Nikabrik's actions and speech, as he wants to kill Caspian right away and is always ready for a fight. Nikabrik also constantly seems to be on the lookout for crimes against the dwarves and at the slightest hint of unfairness, justified or not, he is prepared to fight. The Black Dwarves ask Caspian if he wants to have Ogres and Hags, creatures commonly associated with Black Magic, in his army, and Nikabrik suggests contacting the White Witch. The Red Dwarves have hair like a fox's, which suggests that it is probably reddish in color and is softer than that of the Black Dwarves. They seem to be less defensive than the Black Dwarves as well, although they also are suspicious. Once they give their trust, however, they are completely loyal, as can be seen by Trumpkin's constant willingness to serve Caspian and the four children. Their selflessness is shown when the Red Dwarves give Caspian armor and a sword and when Trumpkin seems to be more concerned about the welfare of the army than his own. The Red and Black Dwarves are alike in that they are physically similar and that they both refuse to believe anything unless they have proof. For example, initially neither Nikabrik nor Trumpkin believe in Aslan or in the "legends" of the Kings and Queens who ruled Narnia in the past, nor do they believe in the power of the horn to bring help. However, each group expresses its disbelief in different ways, as the Black Dwarves mock the idea of Aslan's existence, while the Red Dwarves merely refuse to pin all their hopes on the idea that Aslan would rescue them.

Constructing Meaning

The author uses the phrase, "a very young kitten being carried in the mother-cat's mouth" to describe how Aslan picks up Trumpkin. The author also compares the way the other animals greet him to "a little cat loving a big dog whom it knows and trusts." What kind of image of Aslan do these descriptions create for the reader?

These descriptions give the reader an idea of Aslan's size and power but also demonstrate the gentleness and love with which he treats the other creatures as well. They also convey a sense of trust in Aslan, which lets the reader know that Aslan is a character who is respected not only for his tremendous power but also for his love for his people.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Characterization The author has chosen names for many of his characters that are representative of the characteristics of the creatures' personalities and species, such as calling the squirrel Pattertwig, a name that is suggestive of the way a squirrel lightly runs through the tree branches, or naming the mole Clodsley Shovel to represent the mole's ability to dig through dirt. This is similar to the old tradition of referring to people by their occupations or relationships, which is the source of many modern surnames. Have the students research the origins of their last names and present their findings to the class. Remind them that some names may have originated in another language and been altered over the years.

Making Predictions The children are astounded at the changes that have taken place in Narnia since their last visit. Have the students pick a favorite vacation spot and write a short story about how it would be different if on their next visit they discover that a thousand years had passed since they last saw it. The students should include the changes that would occur in the physical features of the land, such as creeks, forests, fields, and buildings; how the people who lived there would be different; how the changes

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would affect what the student does on his or her visit; and what life would be like then.

Understanding Dialogue The animals in Narnia can speak, unlike the animals in our world. If animals really could speak, what would they say, and how would the people around them respond? Have the students write and act out a short play, in groups or as a class, about a day when all the animals start to talk, and how the humans react.

Responding to Literature The children reassume their daily roles as Kings and Queens of Narnia when they return. Have the students think about what they would do if they were Kings and Queens in a magical country. Have them issue a proclamation that creates a new law. In the proclamation, they must explain what the law is, why it is needed, and how it will improve life in their country. They can decorate their paper with a crest or flag they design for their country.