

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Last Battle

by
C.S. Lewis

Book Information

C.S. Lewis, The Last Battle
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Aslan leads his people to a glorious new paradise after defeating the evil that had infested Narnia.
Book #7.

Award: Carnegie Medal/Honors; NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts

Topics: Adventure, Discovery/Exploration; Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other; Series, Chronicles of Narnia

Main Characters

Aslan the mystical lion whose god-like powers give him the ability to destroy and recreate Narnia; he is known for his kindness, so Narnians are bewildered when Puzzle poses as Aslan and enables Shift to impose horrible conditions on Narnia

Dwarfs residents of Narnia who decide they will not be beholden to any power but their own; they attempt to keep the sides balanced when the last of the Narnians fight against Rishda and his supporters

Emeth Tarkaan the brave Calormene warrior who goes into the stable to meet Tash face to face; because of his loyalty and purity, he is sent to the eternal paradise of Aslan even though he believed himself to be a worshipper of Tash

Eustace Scrubb the courageous boy from England, who returns to Narnia to help King Tirian fight the last battle

Farsight the Eagle the messenger that brings the news that Cair Paravel has fallen to the Calormenes; he helps fight the last battle

Ginger the Cat an accomplice of Shift and Rishda Tarkaan, who helps them carry out their plot against Narnia

Griffle the Dwarf the leader of a rogue band of Dwarfs

Jewel the unicorn friend of King Tirian, who accompanies Tirian to Lantern Waste and later helps him in the encounter with Rishda

Jill Pole the young girl who travels from England with Eustace to help King Tirian; her skills as an archer are useful in the last battle

King Tirian the final king of Narnia, who attempts to stop Rishda and Shift from duping Narnians into believing Aslan has come to punish them; he fights valiantly to the very end

Poggin a Dwarf who defects from Griffle's group in order to join King Tirian in the last battle

Puzzle a foolish donkey who allows Shift to persuade him to imitate Aslan; he is rescued by Jill Pole and regrets his role in the downfall of Narnia

Rishda Tarkaan the power-hungry Calormene who uses Shift to gain control of Narnia; secretly he mocks the worship of Tash and Aslan until he realizes Tash has come to find him

Shift the greedy ape who initiates the chain of events that leads to the end of Narnia; he falls victim to his own plan when Rishda begins to control him

Tash the terrible bird god of Calormen, who comes to Narnia after inadvertently being called by Shift and Rishda; he feeds on the negative motives of his followers but will not touch the pure of heart

Vocabulary

bewildered confused

dogged extremely determined

proclaim to publicly announce

scuffle fight

swerve to turn quickly

wretched miserable

Synopsis

The final book in *The Chronicles of Narnia* begins with an ape named Shift and a donkey named Puzzle finding a lion's skin. Shift sews a lionskin coat and persuades a reluctant Puzzle to wear it so that the two of them can fool Narnians into believing

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that Aslan, the lion god, has returned.

Nearly three weeks later, King Tirian is told someone is chopping down talking trees in Lantern Waste. King Tirian and Jewel the Unicorn go there and see two Calormenes whipping Talking Horses. After the king and the unicorn slay the two men, the Talking Horses say that the Calormenes were obeying Aslan's orders.

Ashamed of their dishonorable conduct, King Tirian and Jewel surrender to the Calormenes who claim to know Aslan. The king and the unicorn think they are being taken to Aslan, but instead they see Shift preaching in front of a stable. He is telling Narnians that Aslan wants them to labor for Calormen. He claims that Aslan refuses to be seen up close, and that they must accept that Aslan and Tash, the terrible Calormene bird god, are the same god.

When King Tirian hears this, he calls Shift a liar. He is attacked and removed by the Calormenes, who tie him to a tree. Several small Talking Beasts come to give him food, but they are afraid that they will offend Aslan if they set the king free.

After the Talking Beasts have gone, the king calls on Aslan to save Narnia and is suddenly transported to a room occupied by the seven friends of Narnia. When he awakens still tied to the tree, he is joined by Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb, two children who have aided Narnia in the past. They set him free, and he takes them to a garrison for supplies and weapons.

The next day the king and the children travel back to Lantern Waste to save Jewel. When night falls, the king rescues Jewel. Jill also saves Puzzle. The king wishes to kill Puzzle when he finds out Puzzle has been posing as Aslan, but Jill convinces him that Puzzle was fooled by Shift, too.

As the group journeys, they come across Dwarfs being sent to work in the salt mines. King Tirian and his friends save the Dwarfs and tell them the truth about Aslan, but the Dwarfs declare that they are only fighting for themselves. Soon afterward, one

Dwarf does come back to join the king and renew his commitment to the real Aslan.

Later the group sees Tash flying toward the stable where Shift had been preaching. Worried, the king and his friends decide to rush to Cair Paravel, the capital of Narnia. Before they have gone very far, Farsight the Eagle delivers the message that Cair Paravel has fallen to Calormen.

Saddened by the news, the group goes back to the stable to show the Narnians the false Aslan. There they find that Shift has already told the Narnians that a Beast has been masquerading as Aslan. Shift claims Aslan is outraged and will only see those who come into the stable. He then sends Ginger the Cat into the stable. The Cat is working for Shift and Rishda, the Calormene, and is supposed to come out of the stables pretending to have been frightened by the sight of Aslan. Instead, he emerges truly terrified, no longer having the ability to speak. Everyone begins to suspect that either Tash or Aslan is actually in the stable.

When Shift tries to force a Boar to go into the stable, King Tirian steps forward and calls for the Narnians to join him and fight the Calormenes. He throws Shift into the stable and notes that a few Beasts have joined with him against Shift and the Calormenes, but many are afraid to act.

The Calormenes fight by throwing their enemies into the stable. The Narnians battle valiantly, but when the Calormenes call in fresh troops, Tirian knows the cause is hopeless. Realizing that Rishda is terrified that Tash has come for him, the king pulls Rishda into the stable with him. In the stable Tash is waiting for Rishda. He grabs him and eagerly anticipates grabbing King Tirian as well, but Aslan tells Tash to leave. Tash departs with Rishda.

King Tirian turns to find seven Kings and Queens standing before him. Among them are Jill and Eustace. Instead of being in a stable, he is in a paradise. Aslan passes judgment on each of the animals. Through the Door of the stable everyone watches Narnia come to an awe-inspiring end. Aslan

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tells them to journey "further up and further in." As they go, they note the familiarity of the landscape. Finally, they realize they are in an idealized Narnia, which is now an eternal paradise.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

How does Griffle's band of Dwarfs feel about what happened to them when Shift tricked everyone into believing that Aslan had returned?

They are bitter and angry that their belief in Aslan made them vulnerable to profiteers like Shift and Rishda. They have become very cynical and decide that if Aslan made them weak to their enemies, they would pledge their loyalty to no one but themselves, to the extent that they attack both Narnians and Calormenes during the last battle. In the end, their disillusionment is so great that they are incapable of being redeemed by Aslan.

Literary Analysis

Why does Tash ignore Emeth even though Emeth wants to worship Tash?

Even though Emeth has always believed in Tash, he has lived an honorable life, as he shows by his willingness to go in and see Tash when others such as Rishda are afraid. He also is ashamed of the means by which the Calormenes entered Narnia, feeling that a warrior should not use deceit to vanquish his enemies. On the other hand, Tash is a cruel god who is only interested in exploiting his followers. Someone as pure as Emeth rightfully belongs to Aslan because he is not selfish or greedy, which means that Tash has no true power over Emeth. Since Tash knows he cannot really control Emeth, he decides to ignore him instead.

Inferential Comprehension

Why do many Narnians continue to obey the false Aslan even though they do not like what he is telling them to do?

There are three reasons the Narnians obey the false Aslan. First, some creatures obey because they believe they have done something to deserve Aslan's wrath, such as the Rabbit who comes to give King Tirian water. They are willing to suffer in order to atone for their sins. Others obey because the legends of Aslan's goodness make them willing to do anything that might make Aslan come or stay in Narnia. For example, King Tirian says he is willing to die if only Aslan will come and save Narnia. Still others obey because they have heard that Aslan is very powerful, and they are afraid he will punish them if they do not obey. This is the case with some of the small animals that feed Tirian but do not want to untie him for fear of angering Aslan.

Constructing Meaning

How does the reader know that Aslan does not approve of the things that Shift and Rishda did in his name?

First, Aslan knows that Shift and Rishda are not his followers: he willingly gives them up to Tash and makes no effort to save them. Second, Aslan does not treat the Talking Beasts as harshly as Shift claimed he would. Shift makes it seem as if Aslan has prejudged all the animals without ever considering their motives, but in the end Aslan gives all animals the opportunity to face him and reveal their true selves. He even tries to show the Dwarfs mercy, but he cannot reach them. Third, Aslan destroys the world that has been tarnished by greed, sorrow, and warfare. He then recreates Narnia, but as a perfect place, impervious to evildoers like Shift and Rishda who harmed it before.

Teachable Skills

Understanding the Author's Craft Many different opinions of Aslan are described by the characters in this story. Have the students draw a picture of

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Aslan and write a short paragraph describing Aslan's qualities from the point of view of one of the characters in the story. Have them identify the character whose viewpoint they are showing.

Comparing and Contrasting In this story, it is important to note the difference between how Tash treats his followers and the way Aslan acts towards his people. Have the students write a brief paragraph detailing the differences in how the two beings act when their followers are brought forward to be judged by them.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Narnia is a unique world with many interesting customs. Have the students make a chart of some events or traditions which they believe could only exist in Narnia. Have them list a reason on their charts why they think these things are important to the telling of this story.

Responding to Literature Oral storytelling is so highly respected in Narnia that Eustace is rebuked by King Tirian for interrupting the flow of Lucy's tale when she is relating the events she witnessed in the stable. Have the students attempt to use their memory to tell an event from this book or a tale of their own choosing to the class.