



The Magician's Nephew



For the novel by
C. S. Lewis

Study Guide

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Progeny Press

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Synopsis

When Polly Plummer meets Digory Kirke, he is very unhappy. His father is away in India, and he and his mother, who is very ill, have moved to London to live with an uncle and an aunt. Digory is convinced that his Uncle Andrew is either mad, or there's some other mystery surrounding him. Digory has been warned by his aunt to stay away from Uncle Andrew's study, and he's also heard strange noises coming from the room late at night.

Digory and Polly become friends, and because of the cold, wet summer days, they are forced to play indoors. While exploring a tunnel that connects their houses, the children accidentally find themselves in Uncle Andrew's study. Uncle Andrew seems delighted to see the children, but Digory and Polly are frightened and anxious to escape.

Uncle Andrew considers himself to be a great magician. He explains that he is conducting an experiment and needs two children as subjects. He gives the children yellow and green rings which, when touched, transport Digory and Polly to a peaceful woodland dotted with pools. They soon discover that they are in a wood between worlds. By wearing the green rings and jumping into a pool, they can enter and explore any number of worlds. Though both children desire to return home, their desire to explore is greater. Assuring themselves that they can return home whenever they want, Polly and Digory try another pool.

They appear in the dying world of Charn and begin to explore its ruins. But when Digory's curiosity gets the better of him, he wakes the evil Queen Jadis who caused the destruction of Charn. Though the children try to escape, they accidentally bring Jadis back to London with them.

In an effort to return Jadis to her own world, Digory and Polly appear in a brand new world on the day of its creation. There they meet Aslan, the great Lion, creator of the new world, Narnia. But the children's actions have brought evil to Narnia in the form of Queen Jadis. In order to save Narnia, Aslan sends Digory on a quest to undo the wrong he has done to Narnia on the day of its birth.

Chapters 8 & 9

Vocabulary:

Look up the definition of each of the following underlined words shown in the context of the sentences where they appear. Write down the definition according to how the word is used in the sentence. Then write a sentence of your own demonstrating your knowledge of the word's meaning.

1. She tossed her new weapon up in the air, caught it again, brandished it, and urged the horse forward.

Definition:

Sentence:

2. The angry, frightened voices were silenced. All except Uncle Andrew's . . . "Oh, oh, is this delirium? Is it the end?"

Definition:

Sentence:

3. "Ah—Cabman—my good man—you don't happen to have a flask about you? A drop of spirits is just what I need."

Definition:

Sentence:

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Descriptive Writing:

C.S. Lewis was an author who effectively communicated the setting of a story with descriptive writing. Descriptive writing appeals to the reader's senses by writing about how things look, feel, sound, smell, or taste.

Beginning with the moment Digory, Polly, and the others arrive in Narnia in Chapter 8, look through the rest of the chapter and find descriptions that appeal to the senses. For each of the following write down one or two descriptive sentences from the book.

Sights:

Sounds:

Smells:

Textures or Sensations:

Questions:

1. How do Digory and Polly finally get the Witch back to the Wood between the Worlds? Who accidentally comes along? How?

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Thinking About the Story:

6. How do each of the characters react to the Voice (before the Lion appears)?
 - a. Polly and Digory
 - b. Uncle Andrew
 - c. the Cabby
 - d. the Witch

7. How do each of the characters react to the Lion's approach?
 - a. Polly and Digory
 - b. Uncle Andrew
 - c. the Cabby
 - d. the Witch

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8. At first Uncle Andrew is frightened and anxious to leave Narnia. He calls it “a most disagreeable place.” What does he notice that changes his mind and gets him excited about the “possibilities of this country”?

Dig Deeper:

9. C.S. Lewis meant for the creation of Narnia to closely follow the creation of the Earth as recorded in the Old Testament. For each of the verses in the table below, write down what part of creation is mentioned, and then write down the comparable event from *The Magician's Nephew*. Some examples are shown.

	Creation of Our World	Creation of Narnia
Genesis 1:2		
Genesis 1:11	God created all the earth's plants.	
Genesis 1:14–18		
Genesis 1:20–25		Animals burst from the ground. Birds emerge from the trees.

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5. The Witch tells Digory that whoever eats one of the apples will never grow old or die. She also tells him that one bite of the apple will heal his mother. She says to Digory, "What has the Lion ever done for you that you should be his slave?" and "What can he do to you once you are back in your own world?" She says that Digory's refusal to bring an apple to his mother shows that Aslan has made Digory heartless.

6. Digory says that he must keep his promise. He tells the Witch that his mother wouldn't approve of him breaking his promises or stealing an apple. When the Witch suggests that Digory could leave Polly behind so his story wouldn't be found out, she makes her fatal mistake. The meanness of this suggestion makes everything else the Witch said sound "false and hollow."

7. Whenever Digory remembers the tears in Aslan's eyes he is sure he has made the right choice. This is assuring because if Aslan cares as much about Digory's mother as Digory himself does, surely Aslan will do all he can to help her.

Dig Deeper:

8. More than once Jesus refers to the one who climbs over the wall as a thief and a robber.

9. Eve was instructed not to eat the fruit of the tree or touch it or she would die. The serpent tempts Eve by challenging what God had said, telling Eve she would not die, but would become like God, knowing good and evil. Similarly, the Witch challenges Digory's trust in Aslan. She tells Digory that he will not die, but will live forever.

10. God expelled them from the garden so they wouldn't also eat from the tree of life and live forever.

11. The right to eat from the tree of life is given to "him who overcomes." (Rev. 2:7) The tree of life is found in God's paradise (heaven) by the river of life which flows from the throne of God "down the middle of the great street of the city." (Rev. 22:1, 2)

Chapters 14 & 15

Questions:

1. Aslan tells Digory to throw the apple toward the river bank. A new tree will grow from the apple. This tree will protect Narnia from the Witch. Aslan says, "She dare not come within a hundred miles of the Tree, for its smell, which is joy and life and health to you, is death and horror and despair to her." (Recall 2 Corinthians 2:15, 16)

2. They are dressed in strange and beautiful clothes and rich robes. Their faces have a new expression. The King's courage and kindness are plain to see on his face; his sharpness and cunning and quarrelsomeness "seemed to have been washed away."

3. The animals decide that Uncle Andrew is not a tree. They dig him up and decide to keep him safe somewhere until Aslan has time to come and see him and tell them what to do. They make a cage around Uncle Andrew and try unsuccessfully to feed him. They nickname him "Brandy" because he calls for it so often.

4. Aslan gives Uncle Andrew the gift of peaceful sleep, so he may be "separated for some few hours from all the torments" he has created for himself.

5. Aslan gives Digory an apple from the newly-planted tree.

6. Digory's mother falls into a "real, natural, gentle sleep" without the use of drugs. The next morning her health has improved so much the doctor says it is "like a miracle."

7. Digory and Polly bury the rings around the place where Digory buried the apple core. (A new tree was already coming up.)

8. The tree grows into a fine tree, bearing non-magical apples, but the most beautiful apples in England. When Digory is much older, the tree blows down in a storm. Digory has part of the wood from the tree made into a wardrobe. This is the same wardrobe found in the book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

9. Uncle Andrew never tries magic again. Lewis writes that he "had learned his lesson." He becomes nicer and less selfish in his old age.

Thinking About the Story:

10. The Witch finds her heart's desire: she will live forever because she ate the apple, but Aslan says she will loathe its taste forever on. Aslan says, "length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery and already she begins to know it."

11. The tree that grew from it would protect Narnia, but it would protect it by making Narnia a cruel empire like Charn. The apple would heal Digory's mother, but Aslan says that her extended life would not bring joy. Both Digory and his mother would one day look back and say "it would have been better to die in that illness."

12. Answers will vary. C.S. Lewis might be warning that we should gravely consider the things that we want. They might not be as good for us as we think.