

Redwall

Study Guide

by Janice and Robert DeLong

For the novel by Brian Jacques

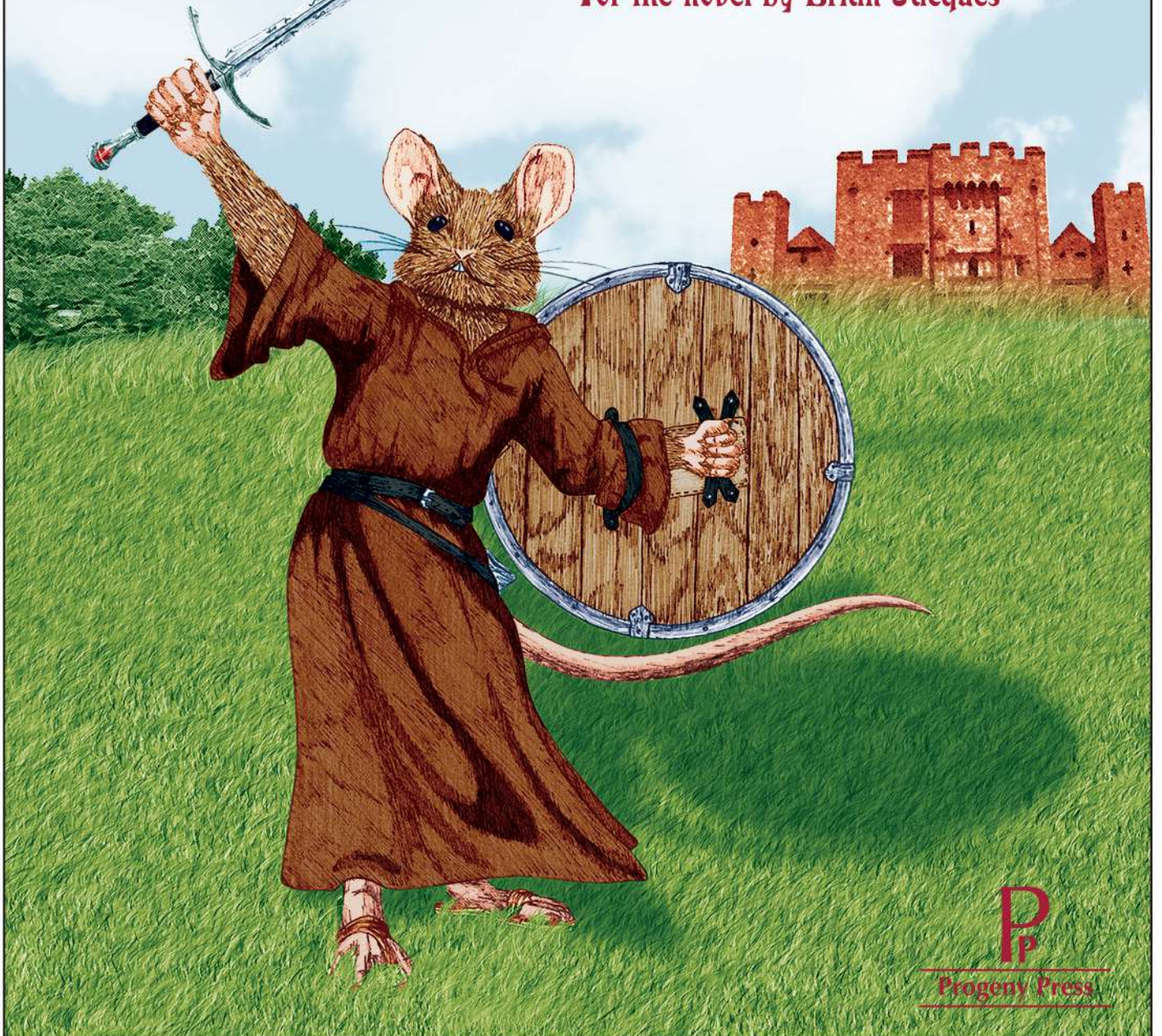


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Synopsis

It is the summer of the late rose in Mossflower Woods. As the animals gather at Redwall Abbey to feast in celebration of Abbot Mortimer's Golden Jubilee, the dark clouds of war gather on the horizon. The evil, one-eyed rat, Cluny the Scourge, and his band of marauders have arrived in Mossflower country. Securing the church of St. Ninian's as his base of operations, Cluny seeks to conquer Redwall Abbey and take it as his own.

Preparing the residents of Redwall to face this cruel rodent of legendary fame and his henchrats are Abbot Mortimer, the religious leader of the abbey; Constance, a fierce and battle-wise badger; and Matthias, an eager but clumsy mouse, as yet untried in battle. Rising to a position of leadership, Matthias finds inspiration and encouragement in the tale of Martin the Warrior, in the wise counsel of Abbot Mortimer, in the battle skill of Constance the badger, and in the admiration of Cornflower, a young female mouse.

The survival of Redwall Abbey will touch not only the inhabitants within its stronghold, but also the fate of hundreds of citizens living far beyond its walls. Author Brian Jacques captures all the evil of the villains and heroism of the noble defenders in this epic animal fantasy.

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Dialect:

Each of the sentences below is spoken by Basil Stag Hare. To help clarify what Basil means, try *paraphrasing* the dialect given below in your own words.

1. “Capital camouflage. You just try lying down anywhere in the shadows. Believe you me, you’d have trouble finding yourself.”
2. “Top hole-cover, absolutely!”
3. “Never let it be said in the mess that Basil Stag Hare was backward in coming forward.”
4. “. . . munching at the old nosebag.”

Questions:

1. Why is it difficult for Ragear to think for himself when he becomes separated from Cluny?
2. What conditions does Matthias find when he enters the church? What does Cluny’s treatment of the church tell us about him?

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3. What does Matthias realize when he discovers that there are no rats in the church?

4. Matthias is concerned that he is not with Constance at a time of danger. He wonders whether the defenders will hold out, and he hopes that Constance is organizing the retaliation correctly without him. Contrast Matthias's thoughts about Constance to Cheesethief's thoughts about Scragg.

5. Why could Abbot Mortimer say with confidence of Matthias, "Well, wherever he is . . . I'm certain that he is helping our cause . . ."?

Thinking About the Story:

6. Authors often include a humorous character or characters in a story at a dramatic or tragic point to provide *comic relief*, or a break from the tension of the plot. Basil Stag Hare is an example of *comic relief*. List three or more examples of what he does or says that makes him amusing.

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7. Why did Basil Stag Hare choose “Stag” as a part of his name? Do you think that he will live up to the name? Why or why not?

8. In literature, a *quest* is a type of story in which the hero/main character is on a search or pilgrimage of some sort. This quest may be to find something valuable, to get rid of an object that has caused trouble, or to arrive at a certain location. By the end of Book One of *Redwall*, what seems to be the quest that will occupy the characters? Which character is emerging as the one that will be taking on this quest?

Dig Deeper:

9. *Paradox* is a statement that seems to contradict itself, yet is true. For example: in 2 Corinthians, Paul says, “For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Chapter 17 of *Redwall* begins with Ragear being lost. What is *paradoxical* about Ragear’s behavior?

10. In his focus on himself, Ragear takes his mind off of what he should be doing and is captured by Matthias. Read Romans 12:3. What does this verse tell us about being too self-focused?

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11. When Cluny the Scourge orders Shadow to steal the image of Martin the Warrior from the tapestry, the residents of Redwall are upset, disappointed, and broken-hearted. However, what do they discover as a direct result of the hole in the tapestry?

Read Genesis 50:15–20. How had good results come from this bad situation?

Read Romans 8:28. What does God promise us?

Creative Writing:

Write an interview with Basil Stag Hare after his success in rescuing the Vole family. Use this to write a newspaper article about his adventure. Remember to include the “5 Ws” of basic journalism: who, what, where, when, and why. Study some good newspaper articles to spark your creativity.

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Book 2: The Quest, Chapters 9–15

Vocabulary:

Part One:

1. b; 2. j; 3. c; 4. i; 5. f; 6.g; 7. d; 8. h; 9. e; 10. a

Part Two:

Sentences will vary.

Questions:

1. After listening to their counsel, the Abbot realizes that his commanders—not he—are best suited to the defense of the Abbey. His duty is to “heal the injured and give sustenance to the defenders.”
2. He takes command and orders the archers to fire.
3. Methuselah is surprised to learn that Matthias can understand the Sparra language.
4. Methuselah recalled that a sparrowhawk he once treated told him that the sparrows had stolen an object of great value from the Abbey. As a test, Methuselah threatens Warbeak with a dagger, and adds that he would spike the sparrow king with the dagger as well, should he decide to come down from the roof. Warbeak, in a fury, tells Methuselah that King Bull Sparra has a big sword—bigger than the little “mouse knife.” Methuselah and Matthias conclude that this is the sword of Martin the Warrior.
5. Matthias forces her to promise to behave, they work together, climbing dangerously higher toward the roof. They laugh together over the stained glass colors, Warbeak saves Matthias from falling, then he frees her and declares her his friend. She decides to stay with him.

Thinking About the Story:

6. The mood of this scene is one of excitement and anticipation. Answers may vary. Some words and phrases: “the moon broke from behind a drifting cloudbank,” “the nearby pond was bathed in a silver sheen,” “the sandstone wall reflecting back a wavery bluish light,” “the moon also waited, suspended in velvety space like a pale gold coin,” “silence reigned over all.”
7. Answers may vary. Sela fears what Cluny might be planning. Cluny smiles only for selfish, cruel reasons.
8. He hides his disappointment and thanks Jess; later he sits alone, questions why, and hits the wall in private. This reaction seems to be mature. It shows he thought of Jess’s feelings, and he only grieved in private.
9. Answers may vary. Chickenhound had no real love for his mother, Sela. He felt she was a fool for not letting him, a “much younger and smarter fox,” handle things. This suggests that Chickenhound is incapable of thinking of anyone other than himself.

Dig Deeper:

10. Both Cluny and Sela have deceit in their hearts, and they both plot evil. Only with a change of heart that promotes peace and truthfulness can they experience real joy. Answers will vary.
11. Knowing that having many commanders/advisors is wise would certainly be encouraging. Yes, they do provide guidance, all of them having a vested interest in the good of the Abbey. Each character brings his own wisdom and experience to the situation.
12. These verses tell us that false witnesses perish, the wicked are overthrown, and cruel people bring trouble on themselves. Their sinful tendencies are going to cost them dearly.
13. He tells them Cluny’s plan, then he lies about grieving over his mother, calls the Abbot a fool, and plots what a treasure house Redwall will be for him. The verse says, “The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; who can know it.” Chickenhound has shown deceitfulness in all his dealings. His mother Sela taught him to be that way. Unless he has a change of heart he will never do anything but be deceptive and take advantage of others’ kindness.
14. a. God expects us to plan and seek wise counsel for the challenges of life; b. The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice; c. Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed; d. Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance.

Chapter Activities:

Badgers measure 20–35 inches in length and weigh 8–25 pounds. They have long claws and are savage fighters. Foxes grow from 23–27 inches in length. They weigh from 8–11 pounds. Black rats grow 7 or 8 inches in length and weigh about 10 ounces. Rats live in large groups with certain rats dominating. It would appear that Jacques has created action that could have happened, if size and behavior are the measure of possibility.