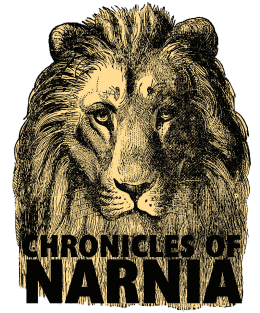




The Last Battle

Study Guide by Carol Clark



For the novel by
C. S. Lewis



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Synopsis

The Last Battle is the final book of the *Chronicles of Narnia*.

One day Shift, a lazy but devious monkey, and Puzzle, a goodhearted but simple donkey, find a lion skin floating in a pool. Against Puzzle's better judgment, Shift fashions the lion skin into a costume for Puzzle. Eventually Shift joins forces with Rishda Tarkaan, a captain of Calormen, and the two plot to take over Narnia and the surrounding lands by dressing Puzzle in the lion skin and claiming that he is Aslan, who has returned to Narnia. Shift says Aslan is angry at the citizens of Narnia and has come to punish them, but he will only speak through the monkey. To further confuse the Narnians, Shift and the Rishda Tarkaan begin to claim that Aslan is the same person as Tash, the evil god of the Calormenes. If Shift and the Calormene have their way, Talking Beasts will be enslaved, the dwarfs will be sent to work in the mines, Tirian and his allies will be killed, and everyone will work to pad the pockets of the Calormenes.

Tirian, king of Narnia, is confused by the reports of Aslan's return and goes with some of his friends to investigate. When Tirian meets Shift and realizes that he is allied with the Calormenes and that his claims contradict things Aslan has previously said, he attacks some of the Calormenes and is tied to a tree and left to die. However, Aslan sends Jill and Eustace, who are from our world but who have been to Narnia previously, to rescue Tirian. The three go back to rescue Jewel the Unicorn, and Jill also frees Puzzle, who has been hidden away in a stable to be brought out as "Aslan" only at night but who is now tired and ashamed of the deception. Slowly they gather more Narnians to their side, and Tirian plans to awaken his subjects to Shift's deception to regain control of his land. Before he can expose Puzzle and Shift's lies, however, Shift and Rishda Tarkaan spin a new lie that tricks the Narnians even further. Tirian urges the Talking Animals, dwarfs, and other Narnian citizens to remain faithful to Aslan and to fight the evil monkey, but though some stand with Tirian, many Narnians fear for their lives and side with Shift.

Tirian and his allies do battle against Shift and the Calormenes, but the Calormene bring up reinforcements and Tirian and his allies are far outnumbered.

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3. What does Puzzle want to do with the lion skin? What does Shift decide to do with it?

4. What is Shift's plan for the donkey, once the lion skin is fastened on him? What is Puzzle's reaction to this plan?

5. What warning do they receive that Shift's plan is wrong?

6. What evidence is presented to Tirian that leads him to believe Aslan has returned? What two warnings does Tirian receive that Aslan has not returned?
Evidence:

Warnings:

Thinking About the Story:

7. *Onomatopoeia* (ahn uh maht uh PEE ah) is a literary technique describing a written word that sounds like the sound it represents. For example, the sound of a doorbell is often written as "ding dong" and the sound of a cat is "meow." Underline or highlight the onomatopoeia words in each section below. Then tell what sound is imitated.
 - a. So Shift promised, and Puzzle went cloppety-clop on his four hoofs round the rocky edge of the Pool to find a place where he could get in.

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- b. Before long they could hear the hack-hack-hack of axes falling on timber, though they could see nothing yet because there was a rise of the ground in front of them.
 - c. There was a great crowd of people at work, and a cracking of whips, and horses tugging and straining as they dragged at the logs.
8. A *motif* is a repeated image, word, object, phrase, or action in a story. It can add a deeper meaning to the action of a story; sometimes its repeated use can point to a theme, or underlying message, of a story. After each of the warnings by Roonwit and the Dryad, we read three times that Aslan is “not a tame lion.” Find and reread these instances in Chapter 2. What might be meant by this motif? What does it tell us about Aslan’s nature?
9. *Foreshadowing* is a hint of something to come later in the story. It is sometimes a way for the author to prepare the reader for difficult or unpleasant events that will follow. Read the quotation below and explain what this may foreshadow.
- “I know by my art that there have not been such disastrous conjunctions of the planets for five hundred years. It was already in my mind to come and warn your Majesty that some great evil hangs over Narnia.”
10. What does King Tirian mean when he says, “If we had died before today we should have been happy”?

Dig Deeper:

11. Why do Shift and Puzzle decide to continue their plan, despite the warning of the thunderclap and earthquake?

12. Read the following Bible verses from Proverbs that speak of wisdom and foolishness. Match each main idea with its scripture reference.
 - a. ___ People may think they are doing right, but God judges their motives. 1. Proverbs 14:12
 - b. ___ The wise person sees danger and avoids it; fools ignore warnings and suffer because of it. 2. Proverbs 15:28
 - c. ___ A righteous person thinks about their response; a wicked person speaks evil without thinking. 3. Proverbs 16:2
 - d. ___ Sometimes an idea seems good, but its end result proves to be disastrous. 4. Proverbs 18:12
 - e. ___ A proud heart leads to a person's downfall, but humility will bring them honor. 5. Proverbs 22:3

13. At the very beginning of Chapter 1, the author says of Shift and Puzzle, "At least they both said they were friends, but from the way things went on you might have thought Puzzle was more like Shift's servant than his friend." How does Shift treat Puzzle more like a servant than a friend?

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Read Matthew 7:12; Romans 12:3–5, 10; and 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. What do these verses tell us about how we should treat each other, especially our friends? Which one—Shift or Puzzle—is most like these verses?

14. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33. What does the verse mean? How is the friendship of Shift and Puzzle like this verse?

15. When King Tirian finds out that someone is cutting the trees and dryads are dying, how does he react? In what way are King Tirian's actions rash and foolish?

16. Read Proverbs 22:3, James 1:19, Proverbs 12:15, and Proverbs 24:5–6. What do these verses teach and how would it have guided Tirian's actions if he had followed these teachings?

Last Battle Study Guide Answer Key

Chapters 14–16

Vocabulary:

1. distinguish; 2. illuminate; 3. vile; 4. constrain; 5. helter-skelter; 6. cascaded; 7. jags; 8. shrill; 9. cataract; 10. feebler

Questions:

1. Answers may vary. When Aslan roars “TIME!” he awakens Father Time from his slumber deep beneath the moors far to the north. He will now have a new name. His awakening and blowing of his horn sets in motion the breakdown of old Narnia. The stars fall from the sky, enormous beasts begin devouring all living things, animals and people rush to the door and Aslan and are separated to the right and left, and finally the sun and moon are snuffed out.

2. Stars in Narnia are not the enormous gaseous spheres they are in our world. In Narnia they are people with long hair like burning silver and spears like white-hot metal.

3. Lucy mourns for Narnia thinking of all that lies dead and frozen behind the door. Jill hoped that it might go on forever. Digory did not think he would live to see it die. Tirian has known no other world but Narnia and believes it would be discourteous to not mourn.

4. When Emeth sees the beautiful country, he initially believes that he has entered the country of Tash. But then he sees Aslan speeding toward him in all the Lion’s greatness and glory and Emeth falls at Aslan’s feet expecting to die because he has served Tash all his life. He is ashamed and terrified, but also glad he got to see the true Aslan. Aslan explains to Emeth that he accepts Emeth’s honest search for truth and honor as service to himself, and he breathes on Emeth, taking away Emeth’s fear and weakness and standing him on his feet.

5. As the kings and queens move “further up and further in,” they realize that they are still in Narnia, but a “more real” Narnia. They also realize that, like the stable, each level is bigger on the inside than it is on the outside, and each level is more real, or a stronger reality, than the last level.

6. Aslan calls Puzzle to him first and speaks with him. Puzzle approaches Aslan looking feeble and silly. When Aslan speaks to him, Puzzle’s ears droop, but when Aslan speaks again, Puzzle’s ears perk up again. No one knows what Aslan said to him.

7. Aslan reveals that there was a railway accident and they and their parents are actually dead. He tells them, “The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning.” They have reached what we might call heaven, the after-life, or eternity.

Thinking About the Story:

8. Answers will vary and may include some of the following. Accept other phrases and explanations if they make sense. a. “So now they found showers of glittering people (sight), all with long hair like burning silver (sight) and spears like white-hot metal (sight), rushing down to them out of the black air (sight), swifter than falling stones. They made a hissing noise as they landed (sound) and burnt the grass.” (sight and smell) b. “Soon one could distinguish the scamper of little feet (sound) from the padding of big paws (sound), and the clack-clack of light little hoofs (sound) from the thunder (sound) of great ones.” c. “But before he had had much time to think of this he felt two strong arms thrown about him (sensations) and felt a bearded kiss on his cheeks (sensations) and heard a well remembered voice (sound)....”

9. Accept reasonable attempts at identifying the different alliterations. The following are possible answers. a. Alliteration: S sounds; sky, stars, star, see, scores, silver. Consonance: Z sounds; is, these,