

## EXAMPLE OF A 2 PAGE DISCUSSION GUIDE

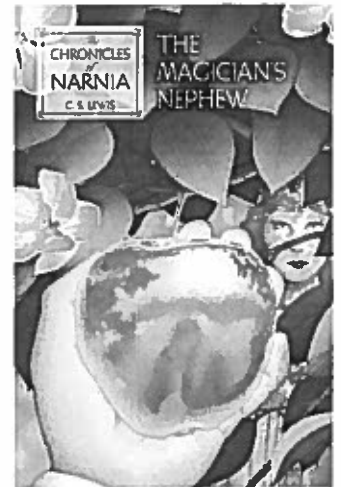
### The Magician's Nephew

#### Theme: Vanity & Entitlement

"But of course you must understand that rules of that sort, however excellent they may be for little boys--and servants--and women--and even people in general, can't possibly be expected to apply to profound students and great thinkers and sages. No, Digory. Men like me, who possess hidden wisdom, are freed from common rules just as we are cut off from common pleasures. Ours, my boy, is a high and lonely destiny."

"I had forgotten that you are only a common boy. How should you understand reasons of State? You must learn, child, that what would be wrong for you or for any of the common people is not wrong in a great Queen such as I. The weight of the world is on our shoulders. We must be freed from all rules. Ours is a high and lonely destiny."

**Discussion Question:** Should some people with greater destinies or roles in society (i.e. rulers, leaders) be exempt from rules for the common people? Can you think of any examples where this is appropriate?



#### Theme: Scientific experimentation

"No great wisdom can be reached without sacrifice."

**Discussion Question:** Is sacrifice necessary to achieve knowledge? To what extent is sacrifice justified? Does the sacrifice of a few justify benefitting the greater good of society?

#### Theme: Danger of Curiosity

"Make your choice, adventurous Stranger;  
Strike the bell and bide the danger,  
Or wonder, till it drives you mad,  
What would have followed if you had."

**Discussion Question:** Is curiosity useful or dangerous? When does curiosity become more dangerous than enterprising?

#### Theme: Self-fulfilled prophecy

"And the longer and more beautiful the Lion sang, the harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe that he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. Uncle Andrew did."

"I know I shouldn't have. I think I was a bit enchanted by the writing under the bell.' 'Do you?' asked Aslan, still speaking very low and deep. 'No,' said Digory. 'I see now I wasn't. I was only pretending.'"

**Question:** How much of what we can or cannot achieve is affected by how much we *think* we can or cannot achieve?

#### Theme: Gift of Reason

"Creatures, I give you yourselves," said the strong, happy voice of Aslan. "I give to you forever this land of Narnia. I give you the woods, the fruits, the rivers. I give you the stars and I give you myself. The Dumb Beasts whom I have not chosen are yours also. Treat them gently and cherish them but do not go back to their ways lest you cease to be Talking Beasts. For out of them you were taken and into them you can return. Do not so."

**Discussion Question:** What are the pros and cons of the gift of reason? Why do you think God gave humans the gift of reason but did not give it to animals? Why does Aslan give the gift of reason to animals in Narnia?

**Theme: Good always prevails over evil**

"I'll go. But there's one thing I jolly well mean to say first. I didn't believe in Magic till today. I see now it's real. Well if it is, I suppose all the old fairy tales are more or less true. And you're simply a wicked, cruel magician like the ones in the stories. Well, I've never read a story in which people of that sort weren't paid out in the end, and I bet you will be. And serve you right."

**Discussion Question:** Why does good generally prevail over evil? Are there any cases in which evil may prevail?

**Theme: Afterlife**

"And if we're dead--which I don't deny it might be-- well, you got to remember that worse things happen at sea and a chap's got to die sometime. And there ain't nothing to be afraid of if a chap's led a decent life. And if you ask me, I think the best thing we could do to pass the time would be sing a hymn."

**Question:** Is the idea of death less frightening if you think you have been "good" throughout life? Why or why not?

**Theme: Role of Perspective**

"For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are."

"But I cannot tell that to this old sinner, and I cannot comfort him either; he has made himself unable to hear my voice...Oh Adam's sons, how cleverly you defend yourselves against all that might do you good!"

**Question:** What do you think about the role of perspective and how it guides us in becoming the sort of person we are?

**Question:** To what extent do we only see what we want to see, and hear what we want to hear? Are there instances when that is beneficial?

**Theme: God's love**

"They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory's own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself."

**Question:** Throughout our discussions, we have talked a lot about human suffering but we haven't touched upon God's suffering. When we suffer, does God suffer with us? Does he perhaps suffer more than we do?

**Theme: Taking responsibility for actions**

"Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off, and I will see to it that the worst falls upon myself. In the meantime, let us take such order that for many hundred years yet this shall be a merry land in a merry world. And as Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it."

**Question:** Is it often clear where the blame falls after the introduction of an "evil"? Is it clear in the novel?

**Theme: Greed, temptation**

"All get what they want; they do not always like it."

"Come in by the gold gates or not at all. Take of my fruit for others or forbear. For those who steal or those who climb my wall shall find their heart's desire and find despair."

**Question:** How is the greed in the witch's actions in stealing an apple different from the greed in Digory asking for one?

**Theme: Selfishness in relationship formation**

"I think (and Digory thinks too) that her mind was of a sort which cannot remember that quiet place at all, and however often you took her there and however long you left her there, she would still know nothing about it. Now that she was left alone with the children, she took no notice of either of them. And that was like her too. In Charn she had taken no notice of Polly (till the very end) because Digory was the one she wanted to make use of. Now that she had Uncle Andrew, she took no notice of Digory. I expect most witches are like that. They are not interested in things or people unless they can use them; they are terribly practical."

**Question:** Do we as a society tend to notice people more when they can be useful to us? Is this beneficial, and do the benefits outweigh the inherent selfishness?

**Theme: Qualifications to rule over others**

"Begging your pardon, sir," he said, "and thanking you very much I'm sure (which my Missus does the same) but I ain't no sort of a chap for a job like that. I never 'ad much eddycation, you see."

"Well," said Aslan, "can you use a spade and a plough and raise food out of the earth?" ...

"Can you rule these creatures kindly and fairly, remembering that they are not slaves like the dumb beasts of the world you were born in, but Talking Beasts and free subjects?" ...

"And would you bring up your children and grandchildren to do the same?" ...

"And you wouldn't have favourites either among your own children or among the other creatures or let any hold another under or use it hardly?" ...

"And if enemies came against the land (for enemies will arise) and there was war, would you be the first in the charge and the last in the retreat?" ...

"Then," said Aslan, "You will have done all that a King should do."

**Question:** Is it enough that the Cabby's only qualification for being a king is that he will try his hardest? Are there times when having royal lineage would be a stronger qualification? In modern society, do connections typically win over individual effort?