

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – Classroom Activities

Through studying *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and seeing the stage production, students explore the world of fantasy and how authors use fantastical settings and characters to teach life lessons. In this story, students explore a myriad of themes and ideas such as: the opposition of good and evil; the value in courage, adventure, forgiveness, and honesty; and the importance of maintaining the natural world. Please find following some classroom activities to enhance the study of the novel or play script in class.

Historical Context and Connections

C. S Lewis wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia* in the years following the catastrophic events of World War II. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* takes place in England in 1939. The story concerns four siblings who are sent to a vast country estate in order to escape the air raids in London. Through a magic wardrobe, they stumble into the land of Narnia which is being ruled with dark magic by the White Witch – who ensures that it is always winter - and never Christmas! Only the return of the great and powerful lion, Aslan, can break the Witch’s evil spell and defeat the forces of evil.

- Research the events of the Second World War and consider why the Allied defeat of the Nazis has been viewed as the triumph of good over evil.
- Discuss how these events might have influenced or may be reflected in the plot of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Exploring the Language

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is written in the idiom of 1940’s Britain and some vocabulary may therefore be unfamiliar to North American students.

- Have students note any unfamiliar words and expressions as you read through the story.
- In small groups have them discuss what these words and expressions mean.
- As a whole group, you will then create a two-column “translation” chart which includes their definitions. You can keep adding to this chart throughout your study of the novel/play.

Mapping Narnia

- Create a map of the world of Narnia showing its physical features, towns, and other places of interest. You may want to include drawings of some of the characters and events.

The Main Events

- Make a story map or a story board outlining the main events of the play.

What a First Impression!

- In role, as Edmund, write a song, a poem, or create your own work of art showing how the White Witch must have looked to you when you first saw her.

Collective drawings

- C. S. Lewis is very descriptive with the details of Mr. Beaver’s home. After reading the passage, have the children draw an interpretation of Mr. Beaver’s home whether on their own or in small groups. After seeing the play performed, revisit and compare these drawings to see how the set designer interpreted this visually.

Thought Tracking/ Tapping in

Mr. Beaver refers to Edmund as being 'treacherous'. He says that Edmund "had the look of one who has been with the White Witch and eaten her food. You can always tell them if you've lived long in Narnia; something about their eyes." We know that the Witch has made Edmund addicted to Turkish Delight through her magic. Discuss whether Edmund is in her control and if he is, indeed, treacherous.

- The students, in role as Edmund, sit down and close their eyes while the leader walks about the space and taps one child at a time. Each child who is tapped utters his or her response to one of the following prompts given by the leader: "I ate it because..." or "She seemed so nice so..." or "It tasted..." or "I couldn't stop..." or "I didn't know..."

Empty Chair/Exploring Bullies

There are some dark and violent moments in the story which can be difficult for younger students to understand. Aslan willingly goes to the Queen as a sacrifice to save Edmund, 'the traitor'. She and her followers humiliate Aslan who submits to their cruel words and actions. The Queen eventually kills Aslan saying these last words to him, "You have given me Narnia forever, you have lost your own life and have not saved his. In that knowledge, despair and die." To safely explore the meanness and bullying of the enemies in the story, students take on the roles of the Queen's followers (Cruels, Efreets, Sprites, Orknies, Wooses, and Ettins) and engage in the empty chair activity.

- Set a chair in the middle of a standing circle of students.
- Attach a piece of paper with Aslan written on it attached to the chair.
- Distribute to the students a jeer or taunt and as they pass a certain point they will direct it at the chair. Go around until everyone has participated.
- Afterwards, discuss how difficult it is to play such a role. What if a real person was sitting in the chair? How is this like bullying?

Sample jeers and taunts from the text:

"See how slowly he walks."

"What a fool he is."

"The fool has come." "Bind him fast."

"Quick, cut his mane off!"

"Why, he's only a great cat after all!"

"Poor Pussy Cat!"

"How many mice have you caught today, Cat?"

"Muzzle him!"

"He doesn't look so fierce now!"