

The Magician's Nephew



By

C.S. Lewis

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of *The Magician's Nephew* and is comprised of five activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

Every activity need not be completed by all students.

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include Christian symbolism, loyalty and friendship, courage and sacrifice (standing up for one's beliefs) and good vs evil.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write a description of personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete an Observation Chart
9. Complete a KWS Chart
10. Create a friendly letter.

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

The Magician's Nephew is the story of the origins of Narnia, where we learn how Aslan created the world and how evil first entered it. Digory Kirke and his friend Polly Plummer stumble into different worlds by experimenting with magic rings made by Digory's uncle. They encounter Jadis (The White Witch) in the dying world of Charn, and witness the creation of Narnia. The story is set in 1900, when Digory was a 12-year-old boy. He is a middle-aged professor and host to the Pevensie children by the time of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 40 years later. [Courtesy of the Publisher]

The following is a review from amazon.com.

"This classic journey of destiny, discovery, and imagination is a great family read-aloud for elementary or middle school kids." (Brightly)

Author Biography

C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis. Clives Staples (Jack) Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland in 1898. He was a close friend of J.R.R. Tolkien (*Lord of the Rings*) when both men were faculty members at Oxford University in Oxford, England. Dr. Lewis was a devout Christian who wrote many books defending and explaining his faith. In 1956, he married the American writer Joy Gresham, who died four years later of cancer at the age of 45. Lewis's works have been translated into more than 30 languages and have sold millions of copies. *The Chronicles of Narnia* have sold the most and have been popularized on stage, TV, radio and the movies. Lewis died on Nov. 22, 1963 - the same day that President Kennedy was assassinated.



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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

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Name: _____

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Chapters 1-2



Before you read these chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy.” There are actually two protagonists in *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory and Polly, two young people who find themselves in Narnia – a land filled with danger and adventure. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels that you have read or movies you’ve seen. Who would you choose as the most interesting and exciting protagonist you have yet encountered? Why did you choose this individual?



Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

indignant	pantomime	cunning	profound
preposterous	mortals	destiny	buffer

1. Did you ever think it was your _____ to become a famous poet?
2. Scrooge McDuck became very _____ when he was accused of being a miser.
3. Why do you think she would speak to an old _____ like me?
4. “I think it is most _____ that he'd accuse you of that,” she said angrily.
5. Little Charlie always gives the most _____ responses to my questions.
6. The street performer began to _____ his actions to the crowd.
7. “We are mere _____, not meant to question the mighty king,” he said sarcastically.
8. The thief exhibited a lot of _____ when executing the burglary.

Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One?

2. Although the author does not tell us in what year the story took place in, he does give us a couple of clues in the second paragraph. Sherlock Holmes was a fictional detective created by the writer, Author Conan Doyle, and the Bastables were characters from the novel, *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*, written by Evelyn Nesbit. Using resources in your school library on the Internet investigate these 2 clues to see if you can determine the year in which the novel is set. Explain your answer.

3. What are three adjectives that would aptly describe the personalities of Polly, Digory and Uncle Andrew.

Polly			
Digory			
Uncle Andrew			

4. Why was Digory living with his aunt and uncle? What was there about this arrangement that he found disturbing?

5. Where did Polly and Digory decide to spend their time because of the bad weather?

6. What was there about Uncle Andrew which alarmed the children (Polly especially)?

7. A cliffhanger is defined as *an ending to an episode of a serial drama that leaves the audience in suspense*. Describe how this is true of Chapter One?

8. How would you describe Uncle Andrew's opinion of himself? Please support your answer with proof from the novel.

9. From whom had Uncle Andrew received the mysterious box of magical dust? What did Uncle Andrew state was very unusual about this person?

10. According to Uncle Andrew, where had Polly disappeared to?

11. Describe how Digory was planning on returning to our world with Polly.

Good to Know – Showing the White Feather.

At one point Uncle Andrew tells Digory, “I hope, Digory, you are not given to showing the white feather. I should be very sorry to think that anyone of our family had not enough honour and chivalry to go to the aid of - er - a lady in distress.”



At the time of *The Magician's Nephew*, giving a person a white feather was telling that person he/she was a coward. This was often done to men during a time of war who were not serving their country in the armed forces.

What is ironic about Uncle Andrew saying this to Digory?

Language Activity



A. A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter Two is, ... *his knuckles cracked like fireworks*. What two things are being compared in this example?



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Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) a car backfiring

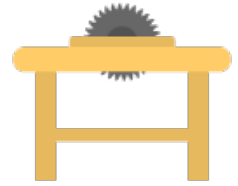
b) a desert sunset

c) your own example

--

B. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first two chapters of *The Magician's Nephew*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
tries		Ceremonies.
stairs		Indian lutes.
sleep		Removes the outer covering.
desert		Discourages.
grate		To price once more.
sealing		Renting.
smiled		Informed incorrectly.
please		Slide by (as in time).

Now find two additional words from the first two chapters which have interesting anagrams and see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

C. Antonyms, Synonyms or Homophones

Beside each pair of words write **A** (antonym) or **S** (synonym) or **H** (homophone). A word from each of these pairs appears in the first two chapters of the novel.

a)	wear - ware		f)	sum - some	
b)	stiff - flexible		g)	polite - rude	
c)	die - dye		h)	grate - great	
d)	fishy - dubious		i)	ordinary - common	
e)	mad - insane		j)	dreadful - abominable	

D. 5 Ws and an H.

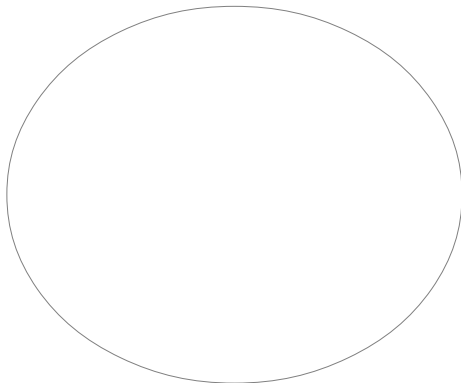
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



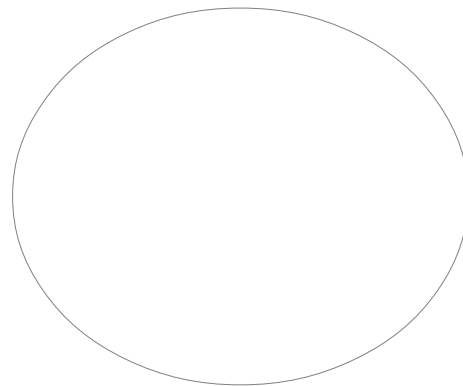
WHO?



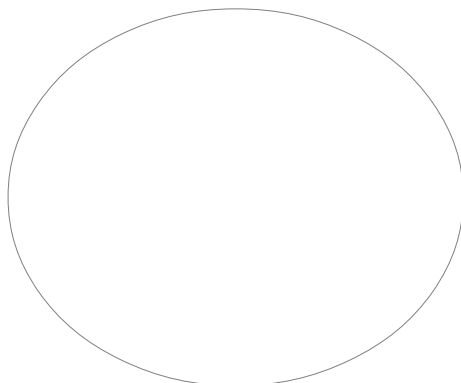
WHAT?



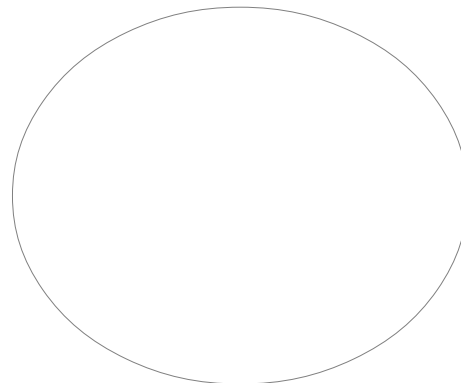
WHEN?



WHERE?



WHY?



HOW?

E. A Quatrain by C.S. Lewis

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and humorous. The following quatrain is actually the first four lines of a much longer poem by C.S. Lewis entitled, *Science-fiction Cradlesong*.

By and by Man will try
To get out into the sky,
Sailing far beyond the air
From Down and Here to Up and There.



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - B - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: AABB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The topic should have something to do with the themes established in the first two chapters of our novel.

The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem on a subject of your choice. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: _____

Here is another quatrain by C.S. Lewis from the poem, *The Meteorite*.
More of his poems can be found on the website, poemhunter.com

Among the hills a meteorite
Lies huge; and moss has overgrown,
And wind and rain with touches light
Made soft, the contours of the stone.

Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first two chapters of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6