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## Narnian Virtues: Character Education and the Promise of the Parent-School Partnership

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# Narnian Virtues: Character Education and the Promise of the Parent-School Partnership

In this paper we report selected findings from the pilot test of our *Narnian Virtues* character education literature curriculum with 160 middle-school aged children in five diverse schools in Yorkshire in the North of England during 2015. More detailed findings will be published during 2016 in the *Journal of Character Education* and elsewhere. After briefly describing this project, we focus on the importance of parents as partners in character education and our plans for assessing the difference parents make when we involve them in the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum. An appendix gives multiple and varied examples of each of 12 universal virtues exemplified in the three C. S. Lewis novels that form the basis of this curriculum.

*This project gets you thinking, like, 'Oh, no—I think I've probably been doing that most of my life,' and it makes you think about how you [can] change it.'*

—An 11-year-old boy in the *Narnian Virtues* project

Does reading good books make us better people? In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre (1981) asserts that “the telling of stories has a key part in educating us into the virtues” (p. 201). A number of other contemporary authors (Bohlin, 2005; Carr, 2005; Pike, 2015; Carr & Harrison, 2015) have also called attention to the promise of good literature as a means of moral and character education.

One particularly promising literary resource, however, has been largely overlooked by character educators: the *Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis. To date, this series has sold 100 million copies in 47 languages. In 2015, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* was included in *Time* magazine’s 100 best books for young adults, as polled by the National Centre for Illustrated Literature, the Young Readers Center at the Library of Congress, and the Every Child a Reader Foundation. Given the extraordinary popularity of the Narnia stories, their strong character themes, and Lewis’s keen interest in

education and character formation (Pike, 2013), we believe his work is a rich character education resource waiting to be tapped (Pike et al., 2015).

Our *Narnian Virtues* curriculum also draws inspiration from the *Knightly Virtues* character education project at the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. This project developed a literature curriculum based on four well-known stories: *Gareth and Lynette*, *El Cid*, *Don Quixote*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. The Jubilee Centre's encouraging findings from a trial to assess programme impact are reported by Arthur et al. (2014) and recently explored in detail by Carr & Harrison (2015) in their discussion of delivering character education through literature. Our *Narnian Virtues* project expands such literature-based character education interventions in at least three ways: (1) by making use of Lewis's heretofore neglected Narnia stories, the moral universe they create, and the important character lessons we think they teach; (2) by developing a curriculum based on literary protagonists (the Pevensies) who are children of an age similar to that of the students reading the novels; and (3) by extending the intervention age to include secondary school students up to 14 years old (see Pike, Lickona & Nesfield, 2016 for an in-depth report on the pilot year implementation).

Our literature curriculum has children study a different Narnia novel each year for three consecutive years. In the pilot version they did so over a 6-week period for two hours a week; in the revised version, the implementation period has been expanded to 12 weeks. Eleven-year-olds read *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*; 12-year-olds, *Prince Caspian*; and 13-year-olds, *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*. These three titles are the best-known of the seven novels in the *Chronicles of Narnia* and are the first three in publication order (Lewis, 1950, 1951, & 1952, respectively), an order in which they are still read by many readers. When we began the project, all three stories had been adapted into major motion pictures (although we did not make use of the movies in the pilot curriculum). These three titles also form a unit in that they all feature members of the Pevensie family as the protagonists, enabling readers to follow these siblings through the three tales.

With the help of C. S. Lewis scholars Ward (MacSwain & Ward, 2010) and Heck (2005), we identified 12 virtues as being salient across the three Narnia novels and relevant to the lives of the children in our project. The 12 ‘Narnian Virtues’ forming the basis of the curriculum are: wisdom, love, fortitude, courage, self-control, justice, forgiveness, gratitude, humility, integrity, hard work, and curiosity.

In an introductory teaching on the virtues and their opposing vices, the teacher explains to students that virtues are good moral habits and vices are morally bad habits. This is consistent with classical thinking going back to Aristotle (1987), who taught that a virtue is not a mere capacity or ability but a disposition—a tendency to act in a good way. Our pedagogy has students do a “virtue analysis” of selected extracts from the Narnia novel under study. Colored markers in hand, children highlight the virtues shown by story characters in green and highlight the vices in yellow. Classroom materials include a Teacher’s Guide with various activities, Student Workbooks, and Student Journals.

Our goal in the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum is to foster character development in the full sense: knowledge, feeling, and behavior—head, heart, and hand. We want students to *understand* the virtues displayed by the Narnia characters; *care about* these virtues (admire them, want to possess them, be repelled by their opposing vices); and, finally, *act upon them* with increasing consistency in their own lives, both inside and outside of school. As children engage the Narnia stories, the teacher encourages them to persevere in their own efforts to make progress in the virtues (efforts they reflect on and record in their workbooks and journals) and realize that the quest for character is a lifelong journey:

No one is perfect. We all make mistakes; we all often act in ways that don’t reflect our best self. Developing good character means trying to be our best self more of the time. Most of us possess these virtues to some degree. Our challenge is to make progress—to practice these virtues more consistently, acknowledge when we don’t, and keep on trying to improve. Everyone’s character is a work in progress.

### **Parents as Partners: Another Overlooked Resource**

Just as C. S. Lewis has been overlooked as a character education resource, so have parents.

The family is the first school of virtue. Parents have the potential to be the most important influence on their children's character development. Berkowitz and Gryce, in their seminal *Journal of Moral Education* article "Fostering Goodness," point out the crucial role parents play in developing the "building blocks of morality" (p. 372). Good parenting, they maintain, can be taught and learned.

Given the importance of parenting, leading character educators have called for greater collaboration with parents. Arthur (2014), for example, states:

Character education should be viewed as a joint responsibility, for it is more effective when teachers and parents are in discussion with each other. Teachers and parents must talk the language of virtue together to help shape the character of the young (p. 1).

In a similar spirit, Ryan and Bohlin, in *Building Character in Schools* (1999), make a strong case for a school-home partnership in their chapter, "Engaging Parents in Character Education."

In principle, the contemporary character education movement has always recognized the importance of parents. In practice, however, the character education initiatives of schools have often neglected to involve parents in a meaningful way. Moreover, character education researchers to date have not attempted to assess the extent to which involving parents makes a measurable difference in student character outcomes. In the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum, we offer our proposed school-parent partnership as an encouragement, in the UK and the US, of a greater research and programmatic emphasis on the role of parents in character education.

Our research design will, first of all, compare growth in virtue among students whose classrooms undertake the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum, with students' growth in classrooms not experiencing this curriculum. To assess the impact of parents, we will compare students in schools where parents work with their children at home on

activities related to the Narnia novels, with Narnia students in schools that are not implementing this parent involvement component.

Schools often ask, “How do you reach unengaged parents?” Our answer is, “If you can’t get the parents to the program, get the program to the parents” (see Lickona, 2004, for various ways schools have done this). To get the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum to the parents, we are designing ‘family homework’, curriculum-related activities that students will do with their parents at home. (For example, to foster the Narnian virtue of gratitude, parents and children can keep a Gratitude Journal, recording at the end of each day “5 Things I am Grateful for Today.”) Such collaborative activities serve as a bridge between home and school.

This kind of collaboration is especially important in contexts where, by choice or circumstance, parents do not normally show strong involvement in their children’s education. Paterson (2011), for instance, cites the finding that mothers from low-income families tend to be ‘less engaged with their child’s school work’ (p. 27). The importance of parents spending time with their children, actively engaged in the interests and activities of their child, is emphasized in *Centre Forum’s Parenting Matters* report (Paterson, 2011).

Significantly, most of the children engaged in our *Narnian Virtues* pilot year of research lived in poorer areas and attended schools (see Pike, Lickona, & Nesfield, 2015, for a description) that did not always benefit from the levels of parental support that are most beneficial to young people. Our subsequent 3-year Narnian Virtues project will provide families from such areas with high-quality resources and training, free of charge at the point of need. This is important because in the “working class” areas of the North of England, especially Yorkshire, educational outcomes are far worse than in London (Clarke-Billings, 2016). Indeed, this educational inequality has grown significantly worse over the last 30 years in the UK (Weale, 2016). In such a context, we think character education that includes a partnership with parents has significant potential to improve educational outcomes for children.

### **How Children Grew in the Narnian Virtues**

The *Narnian Virtues* pilot study found that students reported applications of virtue in their own lives—and more often than not, in home contexts. For example, an exercise for *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*—following an extract about Edmund’s betrayal of his siblings for more Turkish Delight and the Witch’s promise that he would become a prince—invited 11-year-old students to identify what their own ‘Turkish Delight’ might be. A response that emerged repeatedly in students’ workbooks and journals was their use of mobile phones and the Internet, particularly at night and, as a result, not getting enough sleep. In making this connection, these students demonstrated an ability to identify the vice (a lack of self-control) exhibited by a character in their novel and then to recognize it in their own lives as stemming from peer pressure to be socially available and online at all times. For example, one girl wrote:

When I admitted my internet addiction to my mum, she limited my time online for a week . . . It was the right thing to do. Before that I was worried and forgot to eat. I was that addicted.

Here, a parent’s engagement in the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum, in collaboration with her child, was especially effective. Findings like this were part of what inspired us to work with parents more closely in the next phase of our research.

Students’ journals also included space for parents’ or guardians’ comments. Those who took the opportunity to comment on the value of the project made observations such as:

This project has been a good opportunity for my daughter to reflect on virtues relating to herself—her own character traits and also virtues and vices within topics/ books, etc. that she is studying.

Stories are a great way of helping children, and adults, think about their virtues and want to make improvements.

Parental comments such as these were paralleled by student comments—in workbooks and journals, and in interviews and focus groups—recognizing the project as relevant to their lives:

My friends don't really respect people . . . they pick the wrong decisions and it's like peer pressure, they're trying to push me into it. Usually I would go with it, but when we started the virtues, I knew wisdom meant, like, right or wrong—and now I have to think, "Is it right or is it wrong?"

I have shown courage when being offered to do bad things and say no even if I get called a wimp for not doing what everyone else is.

Two 11-year-old boys spoke of the changes in self-awareness of virtues and vices that they experienced through the project:

This project has taught us what kind of person we are. It's actually helped us to realise what we do . . . . You look up deceit or one of the [other] vices and it gets you thinking like, "Oh, no—I think I've probably been doing that most of my life," and it makes you think about how you [can] change it."

It has actually helped me because I used to be very, very deceitful . . . with, like, my homework and my brother.

### **What Good Literature Does**

In *An Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis (1961) noted that: "In reading great literature, I become a thousand men and yet remain myself" (p. 141). Throughout the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum, after students identified virtues and vices in the novel



extracts, we had them engage in an “empathy exercise” where they had to think and write in the role of a particular character who had displayed a virtue or vice. The purpose was to prepare them to reflect on the virtues they wanted to cultivate in their own lives.

Young readers of Lewis’s novels enter a new world in Narnia. In that world, through the characters and events, they learn the real-world value of the virtues discovered and cultivated there. According to Lewis’s friend and colleague, J.R.R. Tolkien, “A Secondary World [the world of the novel] contains an ‘inner consistency of reality’, so that what you find inside is ‘true’ in that it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside” (Hooper, 1996, p. 567). This is important, because the premise upon which character education through literature is based is that reading literature helps with “reading life.”

One 13-year-old girl who read *Prince Caspian* offered this perspective on the value of literature as a way of learning about virtue:

I feel reading the book is a good way to learn about virtues and vices. If someone is just telling you about something, you won’t be as interested. In the book, you learn about different characters—so that reading it is actually interesting, but you're learning at the same time, whilst being interested in the book.

### **Quantitative Assessment of Student Outcomes**

Thus far, we have discussed only the qualitative aspects of the research, but the new quantitative tools developed were also an important aspect of the project. Test instruments were designed to measure both understanding and application of the Narnian Virtues. The Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues (KINCV) assessed students’ ability to select from a list of various behaviours those actions that were examples of a given Narnian virtue (this was intended to provide a quantitative measure of their understanding of the 12 target Narnian virtues). As a further test of understanding, we used a Narnian Virtues Questionnaire, which assessed students’ ability to define the 12 virtues in their own words and explain how a person develops good character.

To try to assess the extent to which students practiced the virtues in their own lives, The Narnian Character Virtue Scales (NCVS) asked them to rate the extent to which each of the twelve Narnian virtues “described them.”

We found a statistically significant increase in students’ mean scores, from pre- to post-test, on the Knowledge Index of Narnian Character Virtues. (See the separate article by Francis et al., 2016, for a more detailed presentation of these results.) Encouraging data also came from the Narnian Virtues Questionnaire, on which students showed a considerable increase in their understanding of virtues and how a person develops them.

However, we saw no statistically significant change in students’ responses to The Narnian Character Virtue Scales (NCVS), which assessed their self-ratings of the extent to which the 12 virtues “described them.” It may be that this instrument was not sufficiently sensitive to reflect the kinds of behavioral changes that students reported in our *qualitative* assessments and that we have illustrated (above) with quotes from their workbooks, journals, interviews, and focus groups. Or it may be that greater change on the quantitative, self-rating survey, The Narnian Character Virtue Scales, would have occurred if the intervention had been longer. Berkowitz and Bier (2004) point out that character education ‘has long relied upon an Aristotelian principle that character is formed in large part through habitual behaviour that *eventually* becomes internalized into virtues’ (p. 80, italics added). If virtues are habits, those habits need sufficient time and practice to become established.

### **The Next Stage of Our *Narnian Virtues* Project**

In the next stage of the *Narnian Virtues* project, we have six goals: (1) to demonstrate how to integrate character education into a school’s regular English classes through the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum; (2) to refine our methodology and materials through continued field-testing in varied contexts and across the 11- to 14-year-old age span; (3) to advance character education assessment research by using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the impact of the *Narnian*

*Virtues* curriculum on students' understanding and behavioural application of the virtues; (4) to fill a gap in the character education research by empirically assessing the extent to which involving parents in the school's character education efforts impacts student character outcomes; (5) to pursue these goals in high-need schools in poor areas where parent involvement and educational outcomes have been historically low; and (6) to scale up from working with under 200 children in 5 schools during the pilot project to implementing and evaluating the *Narnian Virtues* curriculum with 5000 schoolchildren.

### Appendix:

#### Examples of the 12 'Narnian Virtues' in the 3 *Chronicles of Narnia* Novels

What follows are multiple examples of the 12 universal virtues exhibited by story characters in each of the three Narnia novels that form the basis of the curriculum. These varied examples, we believe, reveal the richness of these novels as a character education resource. They also illustrate the contexts in which the virtues are brought to life as the stories unfold and the character of the protagonists is tested.

**Courage:** In *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* Lucy displays the courage of her convictions about the existence of Narnia despite Edmund's mockery and Peter and Susan's doubt even though she is the youngest of the Pevensie siblings. Lucy does not bow to peer pressure and holds to what she knows to be true. Appropriately, when she is crowned at Cair Paravel, her title is 'Queen Lucy the Valiant'. Most famously, of course, in this novel we have Aslan's courage in dying for Edmund. The Pevensies have a good role model in Aslan as they have to face their fears and develop courage as they fight to free the Narnians so they can thrive and prosper rather than live in fear.

In *Prince Caspian*, both Cornelius and the Nurse have the courage to tell Prince Caspian stories of Old Narnia despite the risks this entails. Caspian and the Old Narnians show courage by resisting Miraz's tyranny. Susan is made courageous when Aslan

breathes on her. Yet it is Lucy whose courage is perhaps most significant. She does what Aslan commands her: 'It is a terrible thing to have to wake four people, all older than yourself and all very tired, for the purpose of telling them something they probably won't believe and making them do something they certainly won't like. "I mustn't think about it, I must just do it," thought Lucy'. Lucy has the courage to lead her reluctant siblings over what looks like a cliff, but turns out to be the safe way down. Interestingly, the youngest female character is also the bravest character. It is Lucy's moral courage that stands out; even though Peter displays courage by engaging in single combat with Miraz he only has the opportunity to do so because of Lucy's courage. In short, Peter matures into a great warrior-leader, both a true knight and a true king.

In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* Lucy again shows courage by going upstairs on her own in the Magician's house where she bravely turns her back to the open door. Eustace's attack on the sea-serpent is 'the first really brave thing he had ever done'. All the Pevensies show courage on Narrowhaven in ousting the corrupt governor, Gumpas and freeing the slaves and the ship's company show courage as they are seeking to discover the Lost Lords, the Eastern Edge of the World, and perhaps even Aslan's country.

**Curiosity:** In *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* it is Lucy's curiosity and eagerness to explore that leads to the discovery of the land of Narnia in the first place. Her siblings also show the curiosity to follow. In *Prince Caspian* we see that Caspian's adventures are founded upon his curiosity about Old Narnia before the rule of the despotic Miraz. Caspian is a boy who is curious enough to hear the tales told by his tutor, Cornelius, and by his Nurse and he wants to hear more. His curiosity also gets him in trouble as he betrays this to Miraz who has the Nurse sent away.

Caspian stands in contrast to Eustace in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* as he has no curiosity or desire to see new places and therefore does not appreciate being on the 'Dawn Treader'. In fact, when Eustace is curious, it is for the wrong things, dragon's treasure, and these corrupt him (a salient reminder that for curiosity to be a virtue it needs to be for the right things). Yet the quest itself, to discover new places and see new

things, and the way the Pevensies embrace this quest, demonstrates curiosity as a virtue which all learners need. Not to be interested in one's world and to want to learn and discover shows a lack of curiosity and is a particular vice with especially negative consequences for learners in school.

**Forgiveness:** This is one of the greatest of the 'Narnian' virtues because Aslan's forgiveness of Edmund for his treachery is the most significant act in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. Significantly, this forgiveness is expressed privately and personally. Lewis does not allow us or any of the other characters to be party to the dialogue between Edmund and Aslan as they walk together. We learn that that 'it was a conversation which Edmund never forgot' and his subsequent actions show that he knows himself to have been truly forgiven. Edmund says 'I'm sorry' and shakes the hand of each of his siblings in turn, and each of them solemnly replies 'That's all right'. There are many lesser, yet important, instances of forgiveness. Lucy forgives Mr Tumnus, even though he had intended to betray her to the White Witch. Mr Tumnus wonders whether Lucy can forgive him and she replies 'Why, of course I can', and shakes him heartily by the hand. Her forgiveness is immediate and unreserved.

In *Prince Caspian* Lucy also forgives her siblings for not believing her (again) when she sees and hears Aslan. The Pevensie siblings have to work well together and forgive all sorts of annoyances. They forgive Trumpkin for not believing in them. Aslan treats the defeated Telmarines well at the end of the novel and pardons them, giving them a fresh start. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*, Reepicheep becomes firm friends with Eustace after forgiving him for his attack and all the Pevensies forgive their cousin who has been an 'odious' boy (a reference to his character not his personal hygiene) and a thoroughly unpleasant shipmate.

**Fortitude:** This virtue is displayed throughout the Narnia novels as the children have to persevere and not give up in order to rise to the challenges they face and do what is right. Lucy shows considerable fortitude in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* and endures much opposition in order to follow Aslan and Peter, Susan and Lucy keep going and do not give up in their determination to rescue their brother and

liberate the land. The Old Narnians have shown fortitude and endurance throughout year after year of the harsh winter the White Witch has imposed on them.

In *Prince Caspian* the Pevensies persevere and demonstrate both physical and moral fortitude as they complete the arduous cross-country hike through the wooded terrain to rendezvous with Caspian. They need to find food and water on the way and not only endure discomfort but persevere through their disorientation when finding themselves in a ruined Cair Paravel, only a year (for them) since they have last been there. They reach their destination and achieve this despite disappointments due to setbacks and difficulties such as attacks from both man and beast. In aligning themselves with Caspian as the rightful king, they are backing the underdog at considerable personal risk because it is the right thing to do. Peter takes on Caspian's fight in single combat against the more experienced and dangerous Miraz and has to persevere despite injury.

The quest in the *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* demonstrates fortitude as the young mariners keep going despite such rationing and repeated trials and tribulations such as an attack by a sea-serpent and having to face their fears in the blackness of Dark Island. Fortitude is also shown in attitudes and behaviour of character to the White Witch; despite the threat various characters stand up for what is right.

**Gratitude:** This virtue is displayed by many of the characters in the Narnia stories who routinely say 'thank you' and are appreciative of, and grateful for, what they have. They do not take what they have for granted. Eustace and Edmund stand out in this regard as both are especially grateful to Aslan for rescuing them, Edmund from the death sentence of the White Witch in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* and Eustace from his vile, reptilian existence and as a dragon, separated from human society and his friends quest in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*. In *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* the children are grateful for the help they receive, such as the hospitality and guidance of Mr and Mrs Beaver. In *Prince Caspian*, Caspian is grateful that the old Narnians who look after him and nurse him back to health despite the fact he is a

Telmarine, related to the tyrant Miraz and a member of the race that has cut down trees and sent them into hiding. Yet characters in the Narnia stories are not just grateful for the big things in life, they are grateful for small mercies too such as the water and apples they find when they first arrive in a Narnia much different to the one they left. Perhaps most importantly, throughout the novels the Pevensies are grateful for each other and for friendship as witnessed by Lucy and Edmund's reunion with Caspian on board the 'Dawn Treader'.

**Hard work:** This is an important virtue displayed by the young people throughout the Narnia novels. Quite simply, they have an excellent work ethic and labour to accomplish the tasks set before them. In *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* they labour as they strive to defeat the White Witch even though this is physically and morally demanding. The Pevensies are not lazy and do not sit around waiting for someone else (Aslan) to rescue them, sort things out and do all the hard work. In *Prince Caspian* they realize that Aslan would like them 'to do what we can on our own' while they wait for him to act. They use their mental faculties to problem solve and bring their energies to bear upon the task at hand.

By contrast Eustace is lazy before his 'undragoning' in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* and this has serious consequences. He slouches off to avoid having to work when the 'Dawn Treader' arrives at Dragon Island. He is prepared to let the others do all the hard work maintaining the ship and gathering provisions while he lounges around and has a day off. Once he's 'undragoned' he can laugh not only at his interest in the bracelet but at his 'mouldy' arms, that have 'no muscle' compared with Caspian's. Despite being on a voyage Eustace has avoided work and consequently not developed his muscles by helping out. That Caspian has muscular arms signifies the importance of training and strengthening the body as well as the mind and the spirit. Interestingly we read that Lucy has worked hard at her swimming lessons, and so is not unduly frightened, unlike the panic-stricken Eustace, when they are suddenly plunged into the ocean through the Picture in the Bedroom.

**Humility:** This virtue is displayed by the young people in the Narnia novels when they own up to their faults and admit their mistakes. Showing off is never endorsed or glorified and the importance of being humble enough to learn, to be teachable and to take advice is repeatedly demonstrated. This is shown in the larger events of the novel as well as in small asides. In *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* Tumnus is humble enough to admit his plan to kidnap Lucy. Peter expresses humility towards Lucy, when he discovers that Narnia actually exists. Edmund is humbled by his experience with the White Witch when he realizes how wrong he has been. In the fact that Susan cites her father as her authority when she advises against swimming in strange waters demonstrates her humility and teachability. Trumpkin learns humility when he realizes what the children are capable of and comes to understand that they really are kings and queens. Susan, Edmund and Lucy are humble enough to learn and to listen to Peter when he realizes they have come back to a ruined Cair Paravel. On their journey to come to the aid of Caspian and the old Narnians, Edmund remembers how he betrayed Lucy in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* and ensures he doesn't repeat the mistake. Caspian admits that he doesn't feel sufficient to take up the Kingship of Narnia.

In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* Eustace is humbled when he realizes that he is 'a monster cut off from the whole human race' and Eustace's 'character had been rather improved by becoming a dragon'. He is now 'anxious to help', taking people for rides on his back, lighting fires with his breath, keeping people warm against his side, finding a new mast as well as killing goats and pigs for food. Eustace's new-found humility is a virtue already well established in King Caspian. He is able to take advice from those with lesser status, for example, he acknowledges that 'the Captain can tell you better than I' deferring to another's expertise in a specialist area; he gives Drinian and Rhince the better cabin because they're working harder and sends them back to the ship from Ramandu's island because 'you have had a day's work while we five have idled'. He modestly deflects Drinian's praise of his success in the joust by drawing attention to his own falls and bruises. Caspian's humility makes his later attempt at selfish abdication all the more shocking but admits later 'I've been lessoned'.



**Integrity:** This virtue is displayed by characters in the Narnia novels who are trustworthy and honest and do not lie. In *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* Lucy is not prepared to lie to keep her siblings happy even though they persecute her for her conviction that Narnia exists when they disbelieve in its existence. The White Witch shows a lack of integrity by deceiving Edmund and exploiting his weakness, promising him what she does not intend to give him. In *Prince Caspian* Peter refuses to exploit his advantage after Miraz trips and falls during the single combat, much to the frustration of Edmund, who says, 'Oh, bother, bother, bother. Need he be as gentlemanly as all that? I suppose he must. Comes of being a Knight *and* a High King. I suppose it is what Aslan would like'. This is in contrast to the treacherous Sopespian and Glozel who stab their king in the back when he least expects it. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* Eustace shows a complete lack of integrity before his 'undragoning' and is deceitful, seeking to steal rations of water at night. This is in contrast to Caspian who acts with integrity throughout the voyage even to Eustace when he is a dragon. Caspian does what is right and exercises leadership with integrity, in contrast to characters such as Gumpas, the corrupt governor of Narrowhaven and Pug the slavetrader who exploit others and exhibit a distinct lack of integrity.

**Justice:** This virtue is displayed by Caspian in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* when he strides into the slave market on Narrowhaven and proclaims, 'I declare every slave in this market free'. Here we see the rights of others being upheld and the powerless having their freedom restored and being set at liberty. Caspian even reimburses Bern for the cost of being bought as a slave and sees that the Calormene slave-merchants do not lose out by this dramatic change of policy. In *Prince Caspian* he leads the army in the cause of justice, even though it is Caspian, not he, Peter, who will be the chief beneficiary of victory: 'I haven't come to take your place, you know, but to put you into it'. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Peter and Susan begin by thinking only about the danger Edmund is in and wanting to rescue him from the White Witch. However, they end up accepting the challenge to battle against injustice and

liberate the inhabitants of Narnia from the Witch's oppressive tyranny. Ultimately justice is brought about by Aslan satisfying the claims of justice by paying the debt that Edmund owed. After Edmund has met Aslan and his character has begun to improve he shows a profound understanding in the battle with the Witch. He knows first-hand about justice and has an acute awareness of this virtue: 'Edmund was a graver and quieter man than Peter, and great in council and judgement. He was called King Edmund the Just'. Throughout the novels we see the central protagonists fighting for justice and striving to achieve freedom from oppression for others.

**Love.** This virtue, where characters do what is best for others and put them first, without expecting anything in return, is of central importance in the Narnia novels. Aslan's sacrificial love for the children and for Narnia is the climax of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Love, as a motivating force, pervades the whole of the *Narniad* and underpins so many of the virtuous acts we see. Love of Aslan and love for others, putting others first, not just doing what is good for oneself, is what characters display at their best in these novels. Aslan becomes the central motivator of the children's lives in Narnia ('The quickest way you can help [Edmund] is by going to Aslan . . . That's our only chance'). In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the children show their love for their brother, Edmund, even though he has betrayed them and their love for the inhabitants of Narnia by fighting for their freedom.

In *Prince Caspian* the Pevensies put love into action by fighting for justice and coming to Caspian's aid and to that of the Old Narnians. The brotherly love between Edmund and Peter is evident when Peter goes out to fight Miraz in single combat and the love between all of the Pevensie siblings, despite the occasional squabble and disagreement, is apparent in this novel. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* we witness genuine love for Eustace even when he is being truculent and surly and even when he becomes a dragon; the Pevensies do not stop loving their cousin when he is difficult but this does not mean they pander to him either; Caspian holds him accountable when he behaves badly and the Pevensies want the best for him, which requires a difficult process of change for their cousin.

**Self-control.** This is displayed when the young people who are the central protagonists of the novels exercise restraint and control themselves. Although there are instances where they lose their tempers and are not at their best, there are also examples of wise restraint in the way they interact with each other. Perhaps the best example of a lack of self-control is provided by Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* when he eats a whole box of Turkish Delight and immediately wants more. The White Witch has enchanted the Turkish Delight so that it is addictive and Mr Beaver says he could tell Edmund had 'eaten her food'. Interestingly though, Edmund is greedy even for normal food and there is a clear message here about the regulation of bodily appetites. What he gets from the White Witch, instead of more Turkish Delight is an iron bowl with 'some water in it' and 'dry bread' on an iron plate. His intemperance or lack of self-control is a key factor that puts his life in jeopardy.

In *Prince Caspian* the Pevensies go without food until they find the orchard and have to control their tempers which are all too easily lost when one is tired and hungry. Peter shows self-control by not killing Miraz despite being in a high-pressure situation. Lucy shows restraint and self-control when presented (again) with her siblings disbelief. There are also many situations where the children exercise self-control by not giving in to fear and not panicking when they are in danger or threatened. Self-control is also a virtue of the ship's company in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* who face many threats, not least from Dark Island where controlling one's thoughts is vital. They work together as a team and maintain discipline rather than doing their own thing.

**Wisdom.** This virtue is displayed when the Pevensies, Caspian and the undragoned Eustace work out what is right and good and wisely choose the best course of action. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the children are wise enough to trust and follow Aslan who has their best interests at heart. In *Prince Caspian*, Caspian picks his friends and allies carefully. Consequently, the ogre, the hag and the werewolf are not trusted. Wisdom is essential to choose who one can trust as Lucy imagines a scenario

‘when men started going wild inside, like the animals here, and still looked like men, so that you’d never know which were which’. Trumpkin gives wise advice that the army should not be told about the help they might expect as a result of winding the Horn (discretion is the better part of valour). Cornelius wisely weighs all the options about who might respond to the call of the Horn. In *The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’* the children show a lack of wisdom that leads to them being vulnerable and unprotected which leads to their enslavement but learn from this experience. Peter is shrewd in the way he deals with the Governor Gumpas and claims his rightful authority. The Duffers, or Monopods, are the opposite of the truly wise as they do not know what is good for them. Coriakin yearns for a day when the Duffers can be ‘governed by wisdom’ rather than his ‘rough magic’.

### **A Note on Vices**

Vices are important, too, in the Narnia novels. We see, for example, the consequences of pride and selfishness. Eustace demonstrates a range of vices, and we see the improvement in his character after his transformation. At first, he is a singularly ‘odious’ boy. He is a bad host to his cousins when they are guests in his home, and he is rude to Reepicheep and swings him round by his tail. He is irritable and dismissive when Caspian shows him kindness and ungrateful for Lucy’s cordial that cures his sea-sickness. But he is not the only character who improves; many of the characters in these stories overcome defects of character and develop a range of virtues as we move from one novel to the next.

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### **Invitation**

If you would like to know more about the Narnian Virtues project please visit our website [www.narnianvirtues.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.narnianvirtues.leeds.ac.uk) or email [m.pike@education.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:m.pike@education.leeds.ac.uk) or [p.hart@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:p.hart@leeds.ac.uk) or phone us on 0113 343 4535.

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