

# The Sword in the Tree Study Guide

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For the novel by  
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## Synopsis

Eleven-year-old Shan, son of Lord Weldon, grows up studying to become a knight and great swordsman like his father. When a long-lost uncle appears one night and begins to abuse his father's hospitality, Shan begins to worry. Everything changes when his father disappears. Shan must hide his father's sword from his angry uncle and flee the castle with his mother. So begins Shan's quest to restore his heritage and claim to Weldon castle, taking his quest all the way to Camelot and the feet of King Arthur himself.

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6. Look up the words *emotional* and *rational*. What is the difference?
  
7. Earlier in the book, Shan had to decide whether to act or react to his Uncle taking control of the castle and to the stablehand refusing to obey him. Were Shan's actions in those cases rational or emotional? In Chapters 10–12, was Shan going to King Arthur for help a rational or emotional action?
  
8. Was it brave for Shan to go before King Arthur and ask for help? Why or why not? Have you ever had to be brave to do the right thing? Explain.
  
9. What reasons might Lionel have had to keep his brother alive?

***Similes:***

An author sometimes uses *similes* to make writing more descriptive. A *simile* is a comparison that shows how two different things are alike. A simile uses words such as *like* or *as* to compare. For example: The diamonds glittered *like* ice.

Each of the following sentences contains a simile. Find the sentence in the book and finish it with the words from the book, then write down the two things being compared. For example: "The icy path was as slippery as a wet bar of soap." Icy path is being compared to a wet bar of soap.

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10. “In one garden they saw a peacock with a tail \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.”  
\_\_\_\_\_ is being compared to \_\_\_\_\_.
11. “For a long time Magnus looked up at the towers. They look as \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.”  
\_\_\_\_\_ is being compared to \_\_\_\_\_.

**Dig Deeper:**

12. Read Proverbs 11:2, Philippians 2:3–4, Colossians 3:12, James 3:13. What do these verses teach us about humility?
13. In what ways has Shan had to be humble?
14. Review the definitions of *emotional* and *rational* that you found in question 6 above. Do you think you are more emotional or more rational? Do you think it is better to be one more than the other? If so, which one?
15. Read Proverbs 8:10–11; 19:2; 29:11; Luke 6:35–36; Ephesians 4:26; 1 Corinthians 13:1–3; 2 Timothy 4:5; James 1:19–20. List the two emotions some of these verses talk about. What words do these verses use that are similar

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# Answer Key

### *Chapters 1–3*

#### *Questions:*

1. Shan tells his mother she need not be afraid of war or enemies because King Arthur has conquered all his enemies and it is a time of peace. He also tells her they have the strongest castle in England.
2. The wounded man is Shan's Uncle Lionel.
3. Shan refuses to jerk his horse and explains that his father taught him that a strong pull is better and faster.
4. Uncle Lionel tries to rise in anger to teach Shan a lesson.

#### *Think About the Story:*

5. The servants want to be sure the man is truly wounded and not faking an injury to gain access into the castle for robbery or attack.
6. Shan tells his uncle he does not lie. Shan tells him he has no right to accuse him of lying. Shan walks away and goes to tell his father.
7. No, it does not count as an apology. An apology does not make excuses for your actions. An apology accepts responsibility for your actions and it says you are truly sorry for what you did and for the results of your actions. Pretending something was a joke makes the offense seem as if it were unimportant.

#### *Compare and Contrast:*

8. Answers will vary. Some possible answers include: Lionel is welcomed home—comparison—Son is welcomed home. Lionel yells at Shan and insults him—contrast—Son begs his family's forgiveness. Lionel thanks his brother—comparison—Son thanks his father. Lionel threatens the servants (Nappus)—contrast—Son offers to be a servant.

#### *Setting:*

9. The story is set in the time of King Arthur or in medieval times in England. The story begins in Weldon Castle.

#### *Dig Deeper:*

10. These verses teach us that this behavior is as bad as shooting firebrands or deadly arrows at someone. We should never say or do something bad and then claim we were just kidding or only joking.
11. Proverbs 11:12 tells us that it is better to hold our tongue; Proverbs 12:16 tells us that a wise man overlooks insults; and Luke 6:27–28 tells us to love, be good to, bless, and pray for our enemies and those who offend us.
12. Answers will vary.
13. No, it was not easy to obey his father in these situations, but he did so out of love, honor, obedience, and a decision to always do as his father asked.
14. Answers may vary. Uncle Lionel does not seem good or trustworthy. He shouts at and insults people without even knowing who they are (Shan by his bed, Nappus in the garden), and he seems to assume the worst of everyone. He seems to think he can order anyone around and they should do exactly what he says (Nappus in the garden, Shan riding the horse).

### *Vocabulary for Chapters 1–6:*

1. faint: a sudden loss of consciousness; 2. cloak: loose outer garment, such as a cape; 3. keen: marked by intellectual quickness and acuity, discerning; sensitive, perceptive, clear; 4. dress: apply medication, bandages, or other therapeutic materials to a wound; 5. tales: recitals of events or happenings, stories; 6. trough: long, narrow open container for holding water or feed for animals; 7. groom: person employed to take care of horses or a stable; 8. bold: confident, so confident as to suggest a lack of shame or modesty; sassy or rude; 9. hollow: cavity, gap, or space, a hole; 10. hearth: floor or area in front of a fireplace

### *Chapters 4–6*

#### *Questions:*

1. He is gathering and bringing strangers to stay at the castle.
2. Answers will vary. Lord Weldon won't send Lionel away because they are brothers and he thinks Lionel will leave soon. Lord Weldon is trusting and loyal.