

Watership Down (1972) - Richard Adams

Lesson 4

Extract Discussion

Read and think about the following extract:

"Frith never meant us to go out fighting in the high summer, either, if that comes to that," said Silver. "Everything that's happened is unnatural -- the fighting, the breeding -- and all on account of Woundwort. If he wasn't unnatural, who was?"

"Bigwig was right when he said he wasn't like a rabbit at all," said Holly. "He was a fighting animal -- fierce as a rat or a dog. He fought because he actually felt safer fighting than running. He was brave, all right. But it wasn't natural; and that's why it was bound to finish him in the end. He was trying to do something that Frith never meant any rabbit to do. I believe he'd have hunted like the elil if he could."

"He isn't dead, you know," broke in Groundsel.

The others were silent.

"He hasn't stopped running," said Groundsel passionately. "Did you see his body? No. Did anyone? No. Nothing could kill him. He made rabbits bigger than they've ever been -- braver, more skillful, more cunning. I know we paid for it. Some gave their lives. It was worth it, to feel we were Efracans. For the first time ever, rabbits didn't go scurrying away. The elil feared us. And that was on account of Woundwort -- him and no one but him. We weren't good enough for the General. Depend upon it, he's gone to start another warren somewhere else. But no Efracan officer will ever forget him."

Extract Discussion

Read and think about the following extract:

3. Hazel's Decision

What am I lying here for?... We are lying here as though we had a chance of enjoying a quiet time.... Am I waiting until I become a little older?

Xenophon, The Anabasis

"But, Hazel, you didn't really think the Chief Rabbit would act on your advice, did you? What were you expecting?"

It was evening once more and Hazel and Fiver were feeding outside the wood with two friends. Blackberry, the rabbit with tipped ears who had been startled by Fiver the night before, had listened carefully to Hazel's description of the notice board, remarking that he had always felt sure that men left these things about to act as signs or messages of some kind, in the same way that rabbits left marks on runs and gaps. It was another neighbor, Dandelion, who had now brought the talk back to the Threarah and his indifference to Fiver's fear.

"I don't know what I expected," said Hazel. "I'd never been near the Chief Rabbit before. But I thought, 'Well, even if he won't listen, at least no one can say afterward that we didn't do our best to warn him.'"

"You're sure, then, that there's really something to be afraid of?"

"I'm quite certain. I've always known Fiver, you see."

Comprehension

1. Who is the bravest character?
2. How does Adams build excitement in the story?
3. Who is the weakest character?
4. How would the story differ if Hazel didn't die at the end?
5. Do you think the story has a happy ending?
6. How would the story have been different if the rabbits didn't listen to Fiver?
7. Does Woundwort have any redeeming qualities?
8. What makes Hazel a good leader?
9. How could this ending be happier?
10. What would you change about the story to make it more uplifting?

Vocabulary

1. Blustery
2. Quaint
3. Indifferent
4. Sleek
5. Sentry
6. Recognition
7. Elder
8. Senior
9. Visionary
10. Flaring
11. Enraged
12. Deserters
13. Accainted
14. Undignified
15. Gulped
16. Whimpered
17. Signified
18. Plentiful
19. Sloped
20. Shadowed

HOMEWORK

Why did Adams choose to have **Hazel die** at the **end** of the story?

OR

Write a **short story** using **at least 5 new words** (above) that we learned from these chapters.