

# **The False Prince: Book 1 of the Ascendance Trilogy Study Guide**

## **The False Prince: Book 1 of the Ascendance Trilogy by Jennifer A. Nielsen**

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



# Contents

<a href="#">The False Prince: Book 1 of the Ascendance Trilogy Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1 - 20.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 21 - 40.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 41 - 54.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>



## Plot Summary

"The False Prince" is a young adult novel by Jennifer Nielsen which revolves around a plot to put forth an impostor to the throne to save the kingdom of Carthya.

Sage is a fourteen year-old orphan who steals a roast from a local butcher, but is saved from his wrath by a nobleman named Bevin Conner. Conner is visiting different orphanages, and buying teenage boys who resemble the missing Prince Jaron, heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Carthya. Conner is a minor regent of the circle that surrounds the King. The King's wife and oldest son have been murdered. Conner is a patriot who wants to see the kingdom of Carthya preserved, rather than fall into civil war at the hands of Prime Regent Veldergraft. He therefore concocts the plan to place a fraud on the throne to avert the coming war. Jaron has been missing for years, and is presumed dead following a pirate attack.

Over the next two weeks, Sage and two other boys compete against each other to become Conner's choice for the impostor. By the end of the two weeks, Sage emerges as the choice, but spares the lives of his two competitors. Sage reveals that he is indeed Prince Jaron himself, stunning all those around him, including the king's court. It is further revealed that Conner is responsible for the murder of the royal family and led the pirate attack aimed at claiming the life of Sage/Jaron. Conner is arrested and Jaron assumes his rightful throne.



# Chapters 1 - 20

## Chapters 1 - 20 Summary

In Chapter 1, Sage, an orphan at Mrs. Turbeldy's Orphanage for Disadvantaged Boys in the city of Carchar, in the region of Carthya, steals a roast from the local butcher. Just as the butcher catches Sage, and begins to beat him, a mysterious stranger arrives, pays the butcher for the stolen roast, and tells Sage to stand up. The stranger, a nobleman named Bevin Conner, goes to the orphanage with Sage to see Mrs. Turbeldy. He purchases Sage, but as they leave, Sage tries to escape, but he is knocked out by some of Conner's thugs.

In Chapter 2, when Sage awakens, he is tied up and in the back of a wagon. There are two other boys in the wagons, both with similar features. Cregan, one of Conner's thug vigils, checks to see that Sage is alright, while the other, Mott, continues driving the wagon. The two boys are named Latamer and Roden. The two boys are happy to be out of their orphanage, for Conner has promised them a reward if they cooperate. Latamer and Roden have overheard Conner speaking to others, saying that he is a friend of the King Eckbert's court. Sage gets Latamer to untie him, but as he tries to escape, Cregan knocks him onto the floor of the wagon. A fourth boy, named Tobias, ascends into the wagon.

In Chapter 3, Tobias and Sage remember each other vaguely from time spent in a previous orphanage. Tobias is a rarity, having been well-educated and loving to read. The wagon heads to a small clearing surrounded by trees, where the boys set to unpacking the wagon. Sage realizes they are being hidden. Conner then speaks to the boys, telling them there is great danger ahead, but also great rewards if what Conner is planning succeeds. He gives the boys a chance to leave, and Latamer decides to go -but is killed by Cregan.

In Chapter 4, the boys eat dinner. Conner questions them about what they would do in a battle to the death. Tobias says he would ask mercy and fight another day; Roden says he will fight to the death; Sage says he will ask for mercy, then use the opportunity to kill his opponent. Conner explains that his plan entails fraud and deception for life -and that failure will mean the destruction of the kingdom of Carthya. Sage believes Conner is planning to overthrow the kingdom.

In Chapter 5, while asleep, Mott chains Sage so he won't escape. The next morning, Conner feeds the boys based on their answering questions correctly about King Eckbert and Queen Erin, twenty regents being in court, and so on. King Eckbert has two sons -one of whom, Prince Jaron that has been lost at sea. The other is the crown prince, Darius. Conner asks about Sage's accent, who says he is originally from Avenia, having done everything he could to get as far away from his family as possible. Conner explains that he himself is a regent, and that some regents inherit their positions, while others earn them in service to the king. While the regents claim to be loyal, most of



them want the throne. Conner himself is a minor regent, and claims to have no real aspirations for the throne. The king's chamberlain, Lord Kerwyn, is the second most powerful to the king, but cannot become king. The prime regent, Santhias Veldergrath, covets the throne. Civil war looms. Conner wants neither a Veldergrath throne nor war. And that, he explains, is why the boys are there.

In Chapter 6, as they travel, Conner teaches the boys about Carthya. Tobias recounts how his mother died at birth, and his father of disease. Roden only knows that he was born in southern Carthya. Conner explains he is going to make each of the boys into gentlemen at the end of two weeks' time. The boys all know that whoever loses will die.

In Chapter 7, a few miles outside the town of Tithio, the wagon arrives at Conner's estate, Farthenwood. The boys are directed to clean themselves up, and Sage introduces himself to the servant who will be showing him the way, Errol. The boys ask their servants about politics and Conner's ways, but the servants admit to only ever hearing rumors and bits and pieces of conversations. Safely in a room to himself to bathe, Sage barricades the door and climbs out the window.

In Chapter 8, Sage surveys the estate, then returns to his bath. Sage is not clean enough, so Errol helps him bathe again. Sage is given new clothes, but tells Errol that he will give him a silver coin if he gets Sage's old clothes back. Errol says he will see what he can do. Sage then joins Conner, Tobias, and Roden at dinner. Food is brought in, and one brunette girl catches Sage's attention. Conner instructs the boys on how to eat like gentlemen. After dinner ends, Conner dismisses his servants to tell the boys of his plans.

In Chapter 9, Conner explains that Veldergrath is drawing allies to his side to overthrow the king. War is two weeks away, and war will give Avenia the opportunity to strike and conquer Carthya. Conner recounts how, four years before, when Prince Jaron was eleven, he was sent abroad to study and be tamed, for he was a wild child and an embarrassment. His ship was attacked by pirates, and his body never found. Three regents have gone to the port town of Isel, to seek news of Jaron's life or death. But the truth is that the royal family -the king, the queen, the older son- are all dead, having been murdered by poison in their food, with the cover story being a diplomatic trip to Gelyn. Conner knows Jaron is dead. But he intends to convince the court that Prince Jaron is one of the orphans.

In Chapter 10, the boys are stunned by Conner's plans. But Conner is convinced he can pull it off. Each of the boys resembles the king and queen's families physically in some way. Prince Jaron was a fighter, just like Sage is. Conner plans to serve as an adviser, until so otherwise ordered by the replacement Jaron. But Sage wants no part of it.

In Chapter 11, Mott goes for a walk with Sage to the courtyard, where various swords and weapons are located. Mott questions Sage's training with a sword, and so begins to train him. Mott knows Sage is an actor about many things -including how much he hated his family, how he couldn't care less that Latamer died -and that he will be acting as a prince.



In Chapter 12, Mott sends Sage to bed. He explains to Sage that Conner is no saint, but is a patriot to Carthya. Mott tells Sage to make sure he is chosen. Sage questions Errol about the servant girl, who is Sage's age, and whom is named Imogen. Her mother turned down an offer of marriage to Conner, Errol explains, so Conner raised the rent on their family home, so Imogen must work to pay off the back rent. Imogen is a mute, and so she is a kitchen servant. Sage realizes that if he doesn't do as Conner wants, he will die.

In Chapter 13, the three boys talk about their lives and their futures. They realize they are alone in the world, and that two of them will be dead in two weeks. The boys begin their education, such as reading and writing. Their tutor is the elderly Master Graves. Graves is a no-nonsense scholar and free man who is very strict and calls Sage incorrigible.

In Chapter 14, Mistress Havala teaches the three boys history that afternoon. They wonder what will happen to their tutors at the end of the two weeks. Cregan later gives the boys horseback riding lessons. To teach Sage humility, Cregan orders him onto a wild horse, Windstorm, who takes off running with Sage on her back.

In Chapter 15, Sage manages to hold onto Windstorm until she stops, during which time he falls off. Mott finds him hours later, and brings him back. Mott also wants to know what Sage's interest in Imogen is, because when attention is paid to one servant, the others become jealous and dangerous. Mott tells Sage he needs to get himself together because he is lagging behind the others.

In Chapter 16, Imogen brings dinner to Sage. He introduces himself. But another servant throws a book at Imogen, yelling at her to get out, but Sage pulls a knife on the servant to defend Imogen. Mott enters, and makes both Imogen and the servant leave. Mott and Sage both believe his chances, after losing a prize mare, are gone.

In Chapter 17, Tobias is determined to be selected as prince, and has been taking notes on being prince, which he gathers up to burn so no one else can gain from his efforts. Mistress Havala explains that a king must be compassionate, wise, and educated. Cregan is blamed for the loss of the horse, and will be an indentured servant for years to come for it, though he admits he has his own plans. The boys continue riding and sword fighting lessons. It is discovered the replica of the prince's sword is missing, and Mott goes to report this with the boys. Conner explains it is not an exact replica, and that it must be returned. Both boys insist they had nothing to do with the theft of the sword.

In Chapter 18, the boys practice sword fighting. Afterwards, Sage and Roden talk. Roden believes Tobias has taken the sword, since he is weakest at sword combat. At dinner, Conner continues instructing the boys on their manners and graces. Conner explains a king's duty is to his people, not to himself. During dinner, Sage also notices that Imogen's cheek has been bruised. Conner explains that Prince Jaron must marry Amarinda of Bultain, since Darius cannot do it. The princess will be dining at the estate



at the end of the week. The boys will be in disguise as servants, so they can see how beautiful she is -and make the contest that much more important.

In Chapter 19, that night, Tobias and Sage talk about their lives and their futures. Sage wonders why he ran away from his family, only to end up in the estate. Tobias himself has a plan for when he becomes prince, worked out to the very last detail. Sage goes out to explore and then comes back. He and Roden have a plan to sabotage Tobias, but he wonders if Roden and Tobias have a plan to sabotage him.

In Chapter 20, Sage continues exploring, including Conner's bedroom, finding many clothes and many books. He finds a secret passage between Conner's room, and the room that he, Tobias, and Roden are staying in.

## Chapters 1 - 20 Analysis

Jennifer Nielsen's young adult novel "The False Prince" begins seemingly as simple as her main character appears just as simply: an orphan engaged in theft on the streets of a city. Yet this orphan has a chance encounter with the nobleman Conner, who totally changes the direction of Sage's life. Yet, Conner's appearance is not as it seems, serving to be more an omen than a blessing. Conner has grand designs in his mind of service to his country, and he has been rooting out orphans who appear to match the description of the long-lost Prince Jaron. He intends to avert civil war by securing an imposter to the throne now that the royal family is murdered.

What emerges is an interesting three-way contest between the orphans. Each of the orphans have their strengths and their weaknesses, and each attempts to use their strengths to make up for their weaknesses, as well as to work on their weaknesses as well. Tobias is incredibly intelligent and very well-educated, but his weakness comes in sword fighting. Roden is brash and courageous, but doesn't think things through enough, as well as needing to work on social graces. Sage is defiant and rebellious, though he is clever. He needs to work on his social graces and his ability with the sword, as well as the fact that he says he is uneducated, and therefore cannot read or write.

As time passes on, the boys train and begin to learn more about each other and themselves. Given their serious dilemma, they become deeply philosophical in their musings, wondering what it would be like if they were not alone, if they were not without families. Much is expected from them, and they are aware of this. They are also aware that whomever is not selected, will die. The irony is that when they had no real future as orphans, there was no limit to their future among their station in life; now that they have a chance to rise above their stations in life, they now appear to be fated: one will live, two will die. And the decision rests not in their hands, but in the hands of Conner, who is himself suspect in everything that is unfolding.



# Chapters 21 - 40

## Chapters 21 - 40 Summary

In Chapter 21, Errol returns Sage's old clothes to him, and Sage tells Errol there is a bump in one of Conner's books that needs straightening out -where the silver coin is hidden. Sage discovers a piece of gold, given to him, and hidden in the old clothing, is missing. He confronts Conner about it, who tells Sage that it isn't his anymore. Sage steals it back, and is brought before Conner. Sage refuses to surrender the rock, so he is brought to the dungeon for punishment.

In Chapter 22, Sage is brought down to the dungeons to be punished. He begs Mott not to hurt him. Mott whips him, and then treats his injuries. Sage is then left alone to think about his actions.

In Chapter 23, Imogen smuggles water down to Sage. Imogen reveals she is not a mute, but can secretly speak. Sage falls asleep standing up.

In Chapter 24, Cregan and Mott return to the dungeon. While Cregan goes to fetch fresh bandages, Mott tells Sage he needs to stop thinking of himself as an orphan, but as a prince instead. Sage is then brought before Conner. Conner has found all of the things Sage has stolen, and has also found plans detailing what to do about Conner once a king is named. Conner believes the plans are from Tobias, but Sage will not sell Tobias out.

In Chapter 25, Errol and Imogen take turns caring for Sage's bloodied back. Imogen is curious as to why Sage is so obsessed with a rock. Tobias and Roden are amazed that Sage is still alive. Both Roden and Sage have proved themselves to Conner at some point or another, but Tobias is still awaiting his turn.

In Chapter 26, Imogen continues caring for Sage. Sage also watches as Conner tells Tobias that Tobias is too interested in pleasing him than being prince. Tobias later tells Sage and Roden not to push him, for he is strong enough to stop them both.

In Chapter 27, the three boys are now good enough with horseback riding, so dancing lessons take over. Three servant girls are brought in as dance partners. Sage also reveals he can play a fiddle, but plays a sad, beautiful song that impresses Conner. One of the girls, Jean, brings the boys through the kitchens to show them how everything works. She instructs them on serving. Sage also sees the chef who has struck Imogen, and fearing that it will end up badly, Mott assigns Sage to other duties.

In Chapter 28, the princess Amarinda arrives that night, and Sage goes sneaking around as usual. While in the passages, Tobias pulls a knife on Sage, cutting his back. Tobias tells Sage to back down, because Tobias is determined to be king. Tobias explains he has a plan to deal with Conner in the end, and he says this just outside of





Conner's room. Sage then pulls his own knife out and hits Tobias with the hilt, knocking him out.

In Chapter 29, Errol discovers the new cut on Sage's back, and Roden figures out what happened. Tobias begs for mercy. Tobias offers to fight for Sage in exchange for protection. Sage explains to Mott that he injured himself while leaning out of the window. Mott is not wholly convinced, but refuses to tell Conner about the fresh injury. Imogen comes to care for Sage once more. Imogen knows that one of the other boys is responsible. Imogen tells Sage he needs to straighten up his act. She also tells him she will never bow to a false prince.

In Chapter 30, Tobias sneaks back food for Sage. Roden asks Sage to spare his life if he is chosen, because Sage has the power to stand up to Conner. Roden would make the same promise, but he is not sure he can make Conner do what he wants -so Sage realizes he has to win if he wants to live. Mott directly confronts the boys about the wound on Sage's back, but Sage says they had nothing to do with it.

In Chapter 31, dinner is served in the great hall, attended by Conner and Princess Amarinda. Sage is assigned to be a door servant, while Roden and Tobias are to work the curtains if the sun gets to be too much. Amarinda is gorgeous. Amarinda's marriage has been arranged since her birth, to the successor of King Eckbert. When Amarinda passes, she wonders why Sage is staring at her. Sage explains there is dirt on her face, which she quickly removes. She imagines she must have gotten dirt on her face while looking out through a window. Sage goes on to tell her the dirt does not detract from her beauty. Dinner is then served, which Amarinda's parents also attend.

Conner assures Amarinda that the royal family, despite the rumor, have not been murdered. Conner goes on to say that even if the rumor was true, if Prince Jaron was a live, she would still be betrothed. The talk gives her a headache, so she orders Sage to escort her back to her room. Amarinda asks Sage if he has heard of the rumors. She knows she can trust Sage, because he was honest with her about the dirt on her face. She asks Sage if she should journey to Drylliad, where she is supposed to meet Darius, or if she should stay away. Sage tells her to always choose the side of hope.

In Chapter 32, Mott catches up with Sage after he leaves Amarinda. He tells Sage that Amarinda must do her duty, and that sometimes, the duty of royals brings happiness. Errol helps tend to Sage's wounds, who then goes to see Conner. Sage wants to know why Conner allowed him to go with the princess, and Conner replies that because they have already met, it could be an advantage in the future. Sage wants to know how Conner knows Jaron is dead, but will only give proof of how to the boy who wins. Sage explains that he is considering carefully being king, but will not rush into it like Roden. This pleases Conner.

In Chapter 33, Mott instructs Sage in sword fighting once more, with both of them using wooden swords because of Sage's back. Mott explains that King Eckbert was naive, and failed to see the enemies about him. Later, Tobias tells Sage he trusts him. Mott also tells Sage that Conner doesn't own him, that he had no idea Latamer was going to



die. That night, Conner explains to Sage and the others that Veldergrath is spreading news of the death of the royal family to his advantage, and has heard rumors that Prince Jaron is alive. Conner reveals he will select his prince in two days' time, and then leave for Drylliad at once.

In Chapter 34, an old painting of Jaron is brought out for the boys. Sage looks most like him. Following a haircut and styling, Sage could pass for Jaron's twin, and Conner is impressed. But then Cregan brings news that Veldergrath is arriving with a company of armed men. Conner orders the boys into the secret passages, and all traces of them destroyed. He gives Sage a green emerald box to protect.

In Chapter 35, the three boys watch through the foundations of the estate as Veldergrath and fifty men approach. Food is brought out for the men, after which Veldergrath goes to speak with Conner. Veldergrath wastes no time in asking about Prince Jaron, Conner explains that Jaron's appearance would be good for the kingdom, and Veldergrath is forced to agree. Veldergrath also asks about Conner's raiding of orphanages for boys, which he explains was to help with the crops. Veldergrath insinuates that Conner may have killed the royals, but Conner retorts that Veldergrath served their pudding. Veldergrath also asks if Conner has stolen a green emerald box, but Conner denies this. Veldergrath asks for permission to search the estate for the box or a prince, and Conner agrees.

In Chapter 36, the boys travel around the secret passages, avoiding rooms with Veldergrath's men. Roden comments about how much Sage looks like Jaron, but Sage brushes it off. Tobias reveals he has hidden papers in a hole in his mattress. Sage goes and gets them, and Imogen distracts the men.

In Chapter 37, Sage saves Imogen by stabbing the man, and then Mott arrives, orders both Imogen and Sage out, and stabs himself in the arm with the dead man's knife. Mott tells the men who follow that he was attacked for no reason, and the men move quickly to clean up the mess.

In Chapter 38, Sage is horrified he has killed someone, unintentionally though it was. Conner is impressed by Mott and by Sage's actions. But Conner chooses Roden, because he does not think that Sage can tell a lie for the rest of his life.

In Chapter 39, Roden promises to protect Sage and Tobias, but later has a change of heart. He understands that Tobias and Sage would be threats to him. When Sage and Tobias go to say goodbye, Tobias begs to be spared. Sage doesn't know how Tobias can beg for his life from a liar, and rolls a coin around his knuckles, which causes Conner to stop and say he has almost ruined everything.

In Chapter 40, Sage explains he learned the coin rolling trick as a pickpocket. Conner brings Sage to speak with him in private, and reveals that Prince Jaron could do the same trick. Conner tells Sage to be the prince, to rule for a year or two, and then to simply name a successor and step down from the throne. Sage realizes that if he is king, he will be threatened by others as well. But if he is to be king, he has conditions:



that Tobias and Roden will be allowed to live, and Imogen will be allowed to come, so that her debt to Conner may be paid.

## Chapters 21 - 40 Analysis

As the novel continues, the characterization of Sage evolves. He is a multidimensional character, one that is difficult to pin at first. He appears to be self-serving, uncaring, and vengeful; yet he shows tremendous kindness and consideration for Imogen, as well as the lives of his fellow orphans. Each of the orphans wonders what will become of them, but Sage is determined to win the contest, and spare the lives of his fellows.

At the same time, Sage emerges as someone who is not truly alone. Mott takes a special interest in Sage, helping to train him and encourage him. The kindness that Sage shows to Imogen is likewise later returned, from Imogen to Sage. This occurs especially after Sage has been physically beaten and subdued in the dungeons. With Sage in such a state of sensitivity and vulnerability, Imogen invariably moves closer to him, seeing that there is more to him than rebelliousness. Interestingly enough, this same rebelliousness that puts many people off happens to be reflective of the very same sort of defiant nature of the missing Prince Jaron. Sage, more so than the other orphans, bears a striking resemblance to Prince Jaron -a resemblance the other boys and servants notice.

Whereas Conner once presented the potential villain, his character now moves into the realm of antihero, or perhaps quasi-villain. Conner is character who clearly places his duty to his country above all else, including any systems of morals or ethics that might otherwise govern his actions. He is expressly utilitarian in his pursuit of the ends he desires, which stands as a marked contrast to Sage. Indeed, the true villain of the novel, Veldergraft, emerges, including an incident in force where Veldergraft intends to display his power to Conner and his estate. Compared to Veldergraft, Conner certainly appears to be a scrupulous antihero.



# Chapters 41 - 54

## Chapters 41 - 54 Summary

In Chapter 41, Imogen is angry that Sage is helping her. She doesn't want charity, or kindness from a prince. She wonders how Sage can sell his own freedom so cheaply. Sage goes riding alone, only to be joined by Mott. Mott accepts Sage as Prince Jaron.

In Chapter 42, King Eckbert's decision to send away Jaron to be properly schooled is seen as a decisive moment for an indecisive king. Jaron escapes from the ship before the ship sails, and lives life as a beggar. He is discovered by a priest from church, who contacts Prince Darius.

In Chapter 43, the king, in disguise, comes to meet Jaron in the church. King Eckbert explains he wanted to be a musician when he was younger. Now that everyone believes Jaron is dead, he cannot come back home. If he does, the king will be forced to declare war with Avenia over their pirates. Jaron is given a handful of silver coins and sent to Mrs. Turbeldy's orphanage. Sage really is Prince Jaron.

In Chapter 44, Sage admits that forgetting Sage will be difficult. Sage cannot reconcile the fact that his father has given him up for international peace. But Sage is happy that Mott knows he is truly Prince Jaron. Sage had never revealed himself because he was afraid that Conner would use him for ransom.

In Chapter 45, the entourage spends the night at Traveler's Inn, not far from the castle. Roden and Tobias learn they owe their lives to Sage. Conner, Sage, and Imogen spend the night in the one room available, while Mott, Tobias, and Roden spend the night in the carriage.

In Chapter 46, the two beds in the room are pushed to opposite walls, and a sheet put up in between. That night, Imogen and Sage talk. Imogen apologizes for having said horrible things in the past. She says that after the following day, he will be the most powerful person in the land, and she can never speak to him again after that.

In Chapter 47, Sage and Conner go over the plans for that evening. He also reveals that it was he who ordered the pirates to attack the ship so many years before, to force a war with Avenia for encroaching on Carthyan lands, and Eckbert doing nothing about it. But war would not be declared unless a body was found, and no body ever was. Avenia backed off, making Carthyan borders safer. Conner also has further proof that Sage can offer to prove his claim to the throne.

In Chapter 48, Conner drills Sage with questions, which he answers in preparation for presentation. Conner reveals he has read the queen's diaries, and that she truly loved her son. Mott then reluctantly ties up Sage, so that Conner can make arrangements. He beats Sage, and makes sure Sage knows that he will be an adviser, and that some suggestions must be obeyed without question.



In Chapter 49, when Conner leaves, Mott immediately helps Sage get himself together. Mott pledges his loyalty to Sage. Sage, Mott, and Imogen then eat together. Conner returns with the emerald box. Inside are drawings of Sage as a child. Conner also brings forth the prince's crown, rescued by the pirates from the sinking ship.

In Chapter 50, the journey to the castle begins. Sage passes Tobias a note on the way. The castle comes into view, and is beautiful. Their carriage is one in a long line of carriages on their way to get through. The guard allows Conner to enter, but not Sage. Sage says he knows a secret way into the castle, through the kitchens.

In Chapter 51, the note to Tobias instructed Mott, Tobias, Roden, and Imogen, to wait at the river entrance to the castle. Cregan is sent back with the carriage to the inn. But as they sneak along, Cregan sneaks up behind and threatens Roden's life. But it is a trap: Cregan and Roden wish to head along themselves, while the others remain where they are. Cregan wants to supplant Conner as regent. But Sage challenges Roden to a fight, with the strongest becoming king. They begin dueling with swords. When Sage has the upper hand, Cregan attempts to get involved, but Mott kills him, knocking Cregan and the crown into the river. Tobias offers to find the crown in exchange for being a servant; Sage tells him to be a friend instead, and to go find the crown. Sage also asks if Imogen will forgive him in the near future.

In Chapter 52, Chamberlain Joth Kerwyn oversees the meeting of the regents. The royal family is formally pronounced dead. The bells are rung in memory of them. The regents await Conner's prince, but he does not show immediately. The other regents agree that the real prince Jaron, if he had grown up in the castle, could find his way in- and Sage does.

In Chapter 53, Sage reveals his sword, hidden long before in his bed chamber. Sage also reveals the golden rock as a gift from his father, now a gift for Kerwyn. A note was also left for Kerwyn, explaining the import of the rock, and the genuineness of Prince Jaron. Kerwyn at once bows to Sage. All in the room did so as well. Conner is stunned. But Veldergrath challenges Sage directly. Sage then performs the coin trick as well, leading more people to be convinced of his authenticity. Veldergrath is then escorted out by guards as Conner is named prime regent. Princess Amarinda then speaks up, for she is also present. They dance, and she is convinced of Sage's identity. Tobias arrives, having found the crown. As Conner crowns Sage, he apologizes, asks for forgiveness, and promises to serve Sage forever, on his terms.

In Chapter 54, the coronation ensues. Conner is placed under arrest for attempted murder, and murder of the royal family, and Latamer. Kerwyn explains that war is coming, no matter what. Sage confronts Imogen, who feels afraid and unsure. Sage asks her to forgive him, and names her father a nobleman, and therefore, she is a lady. She is given good clothes and good rooms, and her family's debts are paid. The party celebrating the return of Jaron then begins.



## Chapters 41 - 54 Analysis

There is clearly something emotional that exists between Imogen and Sage as the novel continues, something which transcends both friendship and a master-servant relationship. Mott also emerges as something of a father figure, or even an older brother figure to Sage, further adding evidence to the idea that Sage is truly not alone. Whether or not he recognizes it, he has allies -but Mott certainly recognizes Sage as whom he really is: Prince Jaron. This adds a profoundly different direction to the novel. The false prince is indeed a prince, but it is his identity as Sage that is what is false.

Everything ultimately comes around, however, to the favor of Sage/Jaron. Sage learns that it was indeed Conner who orchestrated the entire plot the surrounding the murdered king and his family, including the murders themselves. It was also Conner who devised the scheme to eliminate Jaron in the first place, to force war with a rival nation, in order to secure Carthya's borders. While Conner's intentions are good, his actions to achieve those ends are atrocious -and he pays for them with the loss of his own freedom from arrest. As promised, the life of Tobias is spared, and Tobias will be a friend, and not a servant to King Jaron. Imogen is also given her freedom, and has her debts paid. War is coming, and nothing can be done to avoid it.



# Characters

## Sage/Prince Jaron

Sage is the fourteen-year-old main character, and principal protagonist in the novel "The False Prince" by Jennifer Nielsen. Sage has grown up in an orphanage, and is adept at pickpocketing. He is rebellious, defiant, and obstinate, but he has a good heart, and good head on his shoulders. He is saved from being beaten to death by a butcher when the nobleman Bevin Conner intervenes, buying him from an orphanage. Sage is one of four boys handpicked for their physical resemblance to the missing Prince Jaron, to impersonate him, secure the throne, and avert war at the hands of the evil Lord Veldergrath.

Sage endeavors to learn the ways of being a prince, overseen by Conner, and with help and encouragement from the free servant Mott. Sage also meets and becomes hesitant friends with Imogen, an indentured servant girl. Sage is ultimately selected to impersonate the king, and proceeds to do so with Conner's help -only for the reader to learn that Conner is indeed the real Prince Jaron, and Conner is responsible for the murders of his parents, older brother, and the attempted murder of Jaron himself. Sage then has Conner arrested for his duplicity, and fires Veldergrath as prime regent. Sage frees Imogen and pays her debts, and secures Tobias's freedom as well. Sage then moves to run the country.

## Tobias

Tobias is one of four orphaned boys handpicked for their physical resemblance to the missing Prince Jaron, to impersonate him, secure the throne, and avert war at the hands of the evil Lord Veldergrath. Tobias is well-educated, but not very good at combat. He is determined to become the imposter, but when he fails to do so, trusts his fate and freedom to Sage, who delivers it.

## Roden

Roden is one of four orphaned boys handpicked for their physical resemblance to the missing Prince Jaron, to impersonate him, secure the throne, and avert war at the hands of the evil Lord Veldergrath. Roden is abrasive, combative, and headstrong, and doesn't always think things through. He conspires with Cregan to supplant Conner and Sage as regent and false prince, but fails to do so. He is then ordered to run away and never return.



## Latamer

Latamer is one of four orphaned boys handpicked for their physical resemblance to the missing Prince Jaron, to impersonate him, secure the throne, and avert war at the hands of the evil Lord Veldergrath. Latamer is weak and sickly, and when given the chance to leave, does so -but is killed because he has knowledge of the plot to impersonate the prince.

## Bevin Conner

Bevin Conner is a wealthy nobleman and minor regent in the king's court. He concocts the grand scheme of putting a false prince on the throne to save his country, and purchases four orphans who resemble the prince Jaron. Conner is duplicitous, however, and is revealed as a severe antihero, having murdered the royal family to supplant them, and having also originally tried to have Jaron killed to make war with a neighboring nation. Conner's plan works, but then he is arrested for his part in the events.

## Mott

Mott is a loyal free servant to Conner, whose father served Conner's father. Over time, Mott comes to serve as a father/older brother figure to Sage, encouraging him and helping him to train. Indeed, Mott risks his own life against Veldergrath's men to protect Sage and Imogen. Slowly, Mott's loyalty is transferred from Conner to Sage, whom he ultimately recognizes as the real Prince Jaron.

## Cregan

Cregan is a barbaric indentured servant to Conner, whom he hopes to ambush and supplant as regent. He conspires with Roden, only to be killed for his efforts in the eleventh hour of the plot.

## Lord Veldergrath

Lord Veldergrath is the prime regent in the king's court, and aspires to be king. He amasses allies and threatens civil war in the kingdom. He is brutish and scheming, and at the coronation of Sage, is fired from his position as prime regent, and escorted out by soldiers.

## Imogen

Imogen is a beautiful fourteen year-old girl who works as an indentured servant to pay off her family's debts to Conner. Imogen is sweet, kind, and caring, and takes a special





interest in Sage. She frequently urges him to better himself, and to take seriously what he is doing. When Sage becomes king, he frees Imogen and has her family's debts paid.

## **Princess Amarinda**

Princess Amarinda is the betrothed of Sage's older brother, Prince Darius. Upon his death, and with the ascension of Sage, she becomes the betrothed of Sage/Prince Jaron. Amarinda is formal but kind, and recognizes strength in people.



# Objects/Places

## Carthya

Carthya is the country where the novel takes place. It is the home of Sage, Conner, and the others. It is also the location of the royal castle, Farthenwood, and Drylliad. It is a rich, wealthy region, though one on the brink of war with itself and its neighbors.

## Tithio

Tithio is the Carthyan town located near Conner's estate of Farthenwood.

## Farthenwood

Farthenwood is the estate of Conner and his family, and is located near the Carthyan town of Tithio. Farthenwood is where Sage, Tobias, and Roden train to become the false prince.

## Drylliad

Drylliad is the capital of the country of Carthya. It is the location of the royal castle, and the seat of power of the country of Carthya. It is the city to which Sage, Conner, and the others travel.

## The Royal Castle

The Royal Castle is the king's castle in the capital city of Drylliad, in the country of Carthya. The royal castle is where the king holds court with his regents, and where he governs the country.

## Avenia

Avenia is a warlike neighbor of Carthya, bent on conquest and war. It is in part from Avenia that Conner seeks to protect the country of Carthya.

## The Crown

The crown is the property of Prince Jaron, and is recovered from the pirate-raided sinking ship Jaron escapes from, It is later used as proof of Sage's identity as Jaron.



## **Emerlad Box**

An emerald box is the property of the queen, and contains sketches of Jaron as a young boy. Conner steals it to use as proof of Sage's identity.

## **Swords**

Swords are wielded and used by soldiers and thugs in the novel, and are used to train with by Sage, Mott, and the others.

## **Silver Coins**

Silver coins are given to Sage/Jaron by the King to ensure his safe trip to the orphanage following the escape from the pirate ship.



# Themes

## Deception

Deception is the singular, dominant, and overarching theme of Jennifer Nielsen's novel "The False Prince." It occurs in two major areas of the book, concerning the characters of Sage and Conner.

Deception concerning Conner has to do with his love of his country, and his willingness to do anything at all to ensure its safety and survival. Originally, he is dissatisfied with King Eckbert's indecisiveness and inability to protect the country's borders. While feigning loyalty to the king, he arranges to have the king's son killed by Avenian pirates, to prompt a war with Avenia. Though peace is temporarily established, the king carries on in an indecisive fashion, leading Conner to personally murder the royal family, and arrange for an imposter prince to take the throne -an imposter that he will personally manipulate for the interests of the country.

Deception concerning Sage has to do in part with his reluctant willingness to go along with Conner ultimately, but Sage is deceiving Conner and the others around him in an even bigger fashion. Sage is himself Prince Jaron, having been sent away by his father to reform, and having escaped prior to the pirate attack. King Eckbert sent Sage into hiding in an orphanage in order to prove that he is a decisive king, and it is a secret the Sage takes to heart and keeps until it becomes necessary to reveal his true identity.

## War

War is a major, ominous, and underlying theme in the novel "The False Prince" by Jennifer Nielsen. War drives the major aspects of the plot of the novel, and informs the actions of several of the characters. War can be seen as approaching both domestically and externally.

Externally, the threat of war comes from Avenia, a region of warlike people who have their eyes on the rich farmland and territory of Carthya. For years, they have raided and encroached upon Carthya, threats which are not dealt with by King Eckbert. His weakness means that men like Conner must move to ensure the country is protected despite the king. He therefore concocts the scheme to install a false prince to unite the country.

Internally, the king's weaknesses mean that the throne is ripe for the taking. The prime regent, Lord Veldergraft, has his eye on the throne. His behind-the-scenes machinations to enlist allies to secure the throne threatens the country with civil war. Such internecine conflict would also mean the country itself is ripe for targeting by Avenia.



Carthya, therefore, faces the threat of not just civil war, but invasion and war from external actors. The country appears to have no good options, so Conner's decision to install an imposter seems the best course for the nation, at least to Conner.

## Loyalty

Loyalty is major theme in the novel "The False Prince" by Jennifer Nielsen. Loyalty has to do with one's beliefs and convictions about a certain individual, cause, place, idea, and so on. Loyalty entails one's dedication to that individual, cause, place, etc., often leading to service, the expense of time, and sometimes blood in defense of that loyalty.

Loyalty in the novel occurs primarily between three characters- Mott, Imogen, and Conner. For Mott, loyalty entails his support of not just the kingdom of Carthya, but loyalty to Conner, and loyalty to the imposter prince. When Mott discovers that Sage is actually Jaron, his loyalty is given to Sage, and is unchallenged.

Loyalty for Conner has to do with his unswerving dedication to the state, and to the survival of the state, at any and all expenses. Loyalty for Conner has nothing to do with people or ideals, but the nation and the people of Carthya. This utilitarian loyalty will ultimately have tragic consequences. Loyalty for Imogen has to do with her dedication to her friendship with Sage, and later a matter of platonic respect to Sage as King Jaron. This loyalty borne of friendship has important consequences for Sage, as Imogen protects his life when Farthenwood is visited by Veldergrath and his men.

# Style

## Point of View

Jennifer Nielsen chooses to tell her novel "The False Prince" in the first-person narrative, from the point of view of main character Sage/Prince Jaron. This is done for at least three reasons. The first is because the story told is that of Sage himself, and there is no one better to tell the story than Sage. This makes the account more personal to the reader, who can experience firsthand Sage's emotions and thoughts. The second is because for most of the story, Sage's true identity must be concealed- including from the reader. Sage is therefore best to guard his own secret. The third is that tenseness is added to the atmosphere of the plot by denying the reader the omniscience of the third-person narrative, making for greater intrigue.

## Setting

The setting for Jennifer Nielsen's novel "The False Prince" is that of the fantasy country of Carthya. Given that the events of the novel are wholly fictitious, the world created in Nielsen's novel are entirely fictitious, a fantasy setting is best for the novel. This allows Nielsen to bend reality and events to her will as needed for the progress of the plot and the courses of action undertaken by her characters. This also allows the reality to be Nielsen's own, therefore, she is able bring characters and events into consciousness without having to concern herself with the limits of real-world locations.

## Language and Meaning

Jennifer Nielsen chooses to tell her novel "The False Prince" in language that is simple and straightforward, yet engaging and fast-paced. This is done because her main character and narrator is a fourteen year-old boy, and a fast-paced, straightforward use and set of vocabulary only further enhances the believability of Sage, and of the plot. Indeed, because the plot is itself tense, brevity in language is important because it helps to speed along the plot, full of twists and turns. Furthermore, the language makes sure the reader isn't bogged down unnecessarily by paying attention to the prose rather than the plot itself.

## Structure

Jennifer Nielsen divides her novel "The False Prince" into fifty-four consecutive chapters. This chronological approach to her novel ensures that the reader focuses on the plot, and isn't distracted by a chaotic or uncommon book structure. This also allows the plot to take shape, and allows for a faster, plot-driven novel. The reader is therefore able to effortlessly move between chapters rather than being compelled to transition between events in different chapters.



## Quotes

"I closed my eyes, horrified that my suspicions might be true. Conner was holding us on the brink of treason" (Chapter 5, p. 35).

"My father said a person can be educated and still be stupid, and a wise man can have no education at all" (Chapter 6, p. 37).

"My plan is simple, really. I intend to convince the court that Prince Jaron is one of you" (Chapter 9, p. 58).

"Now that I knew his secret, Conner would never stop hunting me down. I was trapped here. And my choice was clear. Become the prince, or he'd kill me" (Chapter 12, p. 74).

"If Conner puts you in, then he can take you out" (Chapter 17, p. 100).

"I turned away as she left the room. Unfortunately, I understood exactly how she felt. Nobody should have to bow to a false prince" (Chapter 29, p. 177).

"I'm glad you can appreciate your station in life as a servant. I'm a servant too, you know. Perhaps with finer clothes and servants of my own, but few choices about my life belong to me. We're not so different, you and I" (Chapter 31, p. 194).

"Veldergrath is the last person in this kingdom who wants to see Prince Jaron return. If he finds us, we're all dead" (Chapter 34, p. 216).

"I always felt I looked more like myself than anyone else" (Chapter 36, p. 225).

"Beg mercy from the devils." I spoke more calmly now. "You said you would sell your soul to them for this plan. Your plan worked, and the devils may have you" (Chapter 54, p. 338-339).



## Topics for Discussion

The character of Conner is written complexly in the novel "The False Prince" by Jennifer Nielsen. How does Conner's character appear in the novel? As a hero? An antihero? A villain? Or something else? Provide evidence to support your claim.

Discuss the theme of war in the novel "The False Prince" by Jennifer Nielsen. How does war affect the plot and characters in the novel? How does war appear in the novel? How do the characters attempt to cope with war?

Sage conceals his identity as Prince Jaron throughout most of the novel. Why does he do this?

Discuss the theme of loyalty in the novel "The False Prince" by Jennifer Nielsen. What is loyalty? What kinds of loyalty are there? What is loyalty like for Conner, Mott, and Imogen? Which form of loyalty is the strongest?

Discuss the theme of deception in "The False Prince" by Jennifer Nielsen. How does deception inform the plot of the novel? What do the characters of Sage and Conner have to gain from deception? How and why are each of them deceptive?