Conner and the Winged Horse

Conner Brighten was the sorriest son of a mighty warrior who had vanquished more enemies than any other warrior in the Gargantuan tribe. Conner wasn’t the youngest son, or the smallest son, he wasn’t the fiercest son or the nicest son. In fact, if he stood out from his brothers at all it was only by virtue of being extremely gentle and kind—attributes that were not highly prized among the members of the Gargantuan tribe—and by the fact that he preferred quiet, thoughtful walks alone to roughhousing with the other boys.

One day Conner was out walking among the hills alone, as he often did, when he heard something struggling in a nearby bush. He went closer to investigate, and discovered that a white colt was tangled in the brambles. Conner approached the colt gently, soothing him with his calm demeanor and gentle words, and stroking his velvety white muzzle. When he had freed the colt, to his surprise, he saw that the colt had wings. Conner dared not take the colt back home, so he led the colt to a nearby cave, and fashioned a sort of stable gate for the cave out of large branches and vines.

Conner visited the colt every day, bringing him fresh food and water. As the colt grew, so did his affection for Conner, and Conner’s for the colt. Conner had never been a very good horsemen, one of his many failings in the eyes of his father and his tribe, but as his feelings for the winged horse grew, so did his confidence, and he began to wonder if he might be able to ride the winged horse. The horse was nervous at first, but he trusted Conner, and soon the two where able to sail through the air as one, powerful and exhilarated.

It so happened that around that time, after an unusually prolonged period of peace, the Gargantuan tribe was once again at war. Many of the men had gone to battle, and many had not returned, including Conner’s father. It appeared as though the Gargantuan tribe would soon be vanquished, and the enemy apparently believed this too, since one evening, as the sun was sinking below the mountains, and the orange sky was growing dim, the Gargantuans saw appear, on the horizon, a line of enemy warriors.

True to their nature, those Gargantuans that were left in the village began to assemble and prepared to charge to their almost certain deaths. But Conner spoke up.

“Let me lead you,” he said.
They Gargantuans laughed. To be led by the meekest of them all was ridiculous. But Conner assured them that he had a secret weapon. He begged them to wait for him to return. They agreed, and half an hour later the Gargantuans were astonished when Conner swooped down before them on the winged horse. No one had ever seen a winged horse. It snorted, and stomped its hoofs; its eyes blazed. Now the Gargantuans wanted Conner to lead them into battle, and off they set, towards the ridge where the line of enemy warriors as was still encroaching.

When the enemy warriors saw the young man on the winged horse, they were frightened. They thought that the Gargantuans had discovered some form of sorcery, and they didn’t believe that they could possibly defeat them. The enemy turned and ran. Soon the story had spread to the Gargantuan’s other enemies that they had a race of fierce dragons at their disposal, and no one ever attacked the Gargantuan tribe again. Conner brought the winged horse to live with him in the village, and became the leader of the tribe. He ruled a peaceful kingdom gently and wisely for the rest of his years.

1. How does Conner’s interaction with the winged horse change his character?

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2. How does Conner’s changed character change the character of the Gargantuan tribe?

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3. Explain how Conner’s character traits are essential to the plot.

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