

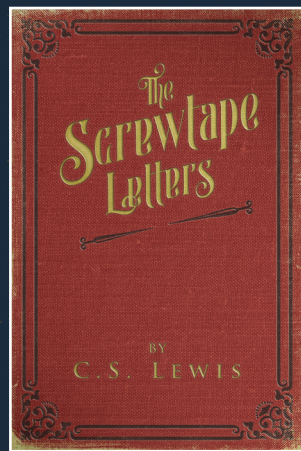


HIGH SCHOOL HONORS

BOOK STUDY

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

by C.S. Lewis



◊ THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL ◊

ABOUT THE BOOK STUDY

What are Honors Book Studies?

The Good and the Beautiful Honors Book Studies are student-directed consumable booklets that accompany select books from The Good and the Beautiful Library or other wonderful and inspiring books. Each Honors Book Study is designed to help students explore the book's themes and messages, appreciate the literary value of the book, and learn new vocabulary and writing skills that correlate with the book. To complete an Honors Book Study, the student simply reads and follows the instructions in the booklet while reading the corresponding book. The Honors Book Studies are intended to be completed independently, or they can be completed in a group, class, or book club setting.

What are the goals of the Honors Book Studies?

There are three main goals of the Honors Book Studies: to help the student learn to **analyze**, **appreciate**, and **gain inspiration** from good and beautiful literature.

How many Honors Book Studies should be completed?

Students can complete as few or as many of the Honors Book Studies as desired. Honors Book Studies are not designed to take the place of the High School Language Arts courses; they are designed to be used in addition to the courses for those students who work at a faster pace and can use more challenging work. The reading books for the Honors Book Studies are more challenging than the required reading books for the High School Language Arts courses and can be completed in any order.

What materials are needed?

To complete this book study, you will need the following items:

- This book study booklet
- *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis
- A computer or laptop with a basic word processing program, such as Word or Google Docs
- A pencil or pen and a journal or notebook
- A Bible

AT-A-GLANCE

Author Study

- Biography of C. S. Lewis

Vocabulary

- Challenging vocabulary words in *The Screwtape Letters* (see pages 4–6)

Literary Analysis

- Study the themes and messages in *The Screwtape Letters*
- Analyze select quotations from *The Screwtape Letters*

Writing

- Personal Notebook Response questions
- Scriptural Connection questions
- Writing a “Screwtape Letter”

Group Discussion

- Extra discussion questions for those completing this book study with a group

Author Study

C. S. LEWIS: A SOLDIER IN GOD'S ARMY

Clive Staples Lewis, known to his friends and family simply as “Jack,” was born in Belfast, Ireland, on November 29, 1898. From a young age, Lewis had a deep love of books and storytelling. He and his older brother, Warren, spent their childhood writing and illustrating tales about “Boxen,” an imaginary land of their own creation. Boxen, populated by talking animals, had a rich and complicated history, political system, and socioeconomic structure all its own. Undoubtedly, the seeds for Lewis’s popular fantasy series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, were sown during those early creative years. Sadly, the boys’ mother died when Lewis was 10, and the brothers were sent off to separate boarding schools. The next few years were difficult and lonely ones for Lewis, but he and his brother remained close friends throughout their lives.

Soon after beginning his studies at the University of Oxford, Lewis was drafted into the army. At the young age of 19, he was sent to the front lines in France, where he witnessed the horrors of World War I and trench warfare. He was much more fortunate than many, however. In April of 1918, he was wounded by a shell that killed two of his comrades and sent back to England to receive treatment. By the time he had recovered, the war was over, and Lewis returned to Oxford to finish his studies in Greek, Latin, and English literature.

Lewis excelled at Oxford and after graduation stayed on first as a tutor in philosophy and then as a member of the English Literature faculty. In the introduction to their biography on Lewis, his friends Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper wrote, “To write the biography of a man of genius as many-sided as C. S. Lewis is a daunting task ... His ideal biographer would have to be at once a Classical and English scholar, a theologian, a philosopher, an expert on fantasy, science fiction and children’s books—and no one but Lewis himself possessed all these qualifications in sufficient degree.” It is evident that Lewis’s intellect

was deep and wide reaching, and based on the number of books, speeches, and letters he left behind, it seems as though his pen hardly ever rested.

Nearly every week for over a decade, Lewis gathered with a group of literary-minded friends at The Eagle and Child, a pub in Oxford. The group, which included Lewis’s dear friend J. R. R. Tolkien, became known as “The Inklings.” During these informal meetings, members would discuss wide-ranging topics and read aloud from their works in progress. It was to this group that Tolkien first read the manuscript that would become *The Lord of the Rings*. Lewis shared several of his manuscripts with the group too, including those that became *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, and *Out of the Silent Planet*, the first novel in his science fiction trilogy. Those lively, friendly gatherings were some of Lewis’s favorite times, and

they are where he first received the encouragement and criticism he needed to hone his writing and ideas. About the Inklings, Lewis wrote, “Is any pleasure on earth as great as a circle of Christian friends by a good fire?”



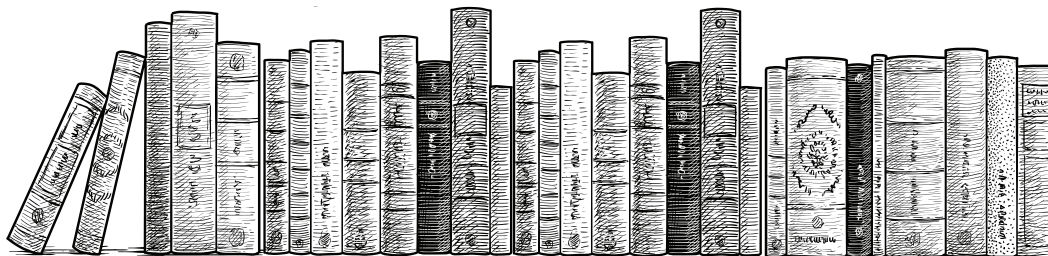
Though he wrote numerous books, essays, and speeches on theology and is remembered as one of Christianity’s most stalwart defenders, Lewis spent many years of his life as an atheist. After losing his mother at a young age, spending his formative years friendless and in a school he hated, and then watching the horrors of WWI from the front lines, it is little wonder that Lewis abandoned his childhood faith and belief in a loving Heavenly Father. However, Lewis’s fervent desire

to believe and his own good sense would not allow him to completely walk away from the question of God’s existence. He says about that time in his early 20s, “I was at that time living like many atheists: in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing.” These contradictions tormented Lewis, as much as he tried to affect indifference about his atheism.

Several factors played an important role in Lewis’s conversion. Perhaps most influential was his friendship with J. R. R. Tolkien, a devout Catholic, and other Christians at Oxford. Lewis had many late-night discussions with these faithful men, and though he tried to correct what he saw as their mistaken logic, he realized over time that they were chipping away at all his arguments for atheism. And that is another important factor in Lewis’s conversion—

VOCABULARY WORDS

“Be sure you know the meaning (or meanings)
of every word you use.” —C. S. Lewis



acquiesce [ak-wee-ESS]: to agree to or comply with

Mom and Dad did not often acquiesce to our pleas for more screen time.

asphyxiate [as-FIK-see-ate]: to kill or make unconscious through lack of air

Not wanting to asphyxiate themselves, scuba divers keep a close eye on their oxygen gauges.

attrition [uh-TRI-shun]: the state of being worn or weakened by continual attack

Attrition of the grinding gears caused the machine to eventually break down.

chattel [CHA-tul]: an item of personal property; slave

The practice of treating humans as chattel is a blight on our nation's history.

corporeal [kor-POR-ee-ul]: having a material body; physical as opposed to spiritual

In Greek mythology, the gods often take corporeal form as humans or animals.

coterie [KOH-tur-ee]: a fashionable, often exclusive, group of people with common interests or goals

Sharon met weekly with a coterie of her fellow artists to share and discuss their work.

demure [duh-MYUR]: reserved, sober, and modest or affectedly so; coy

I wore my most demure gray pantsuit to the job interview.

dossier [DAW-see-ay]: a file containing documents and detailed information about a specific person or subject

After years of treatments, my medical dossier could fill a whole filing cabinet.

exploitation [ek-sploy-TAY-shun]: the act of using someone unfairly in order to profit from them

The exploitation of child labor thankfully ended in the United States in the 1930s.

expurgated [EK-spur-gay-ted]: purged or cleansed from anything offensive, harmful, or incorrect

His letters were expurgated of all profane phrases before being published.

fidelity [fuh-DEL-uh-tee]: faithfulness; careful and exact observance of duty

Many abolitionists displayed an admirable fidelity to the cause of freedom.

foment [foh-MENT]: to encourage the growth of by agitation, excitement; to incite

The gang was accused of fomenting violence and was sentenced to prison.

Section 1

Letters 1-5

Introduction

Welcome to *The Screwtape Letters* Honors Book Study. You will use this book study as a guide to learning and personal reflection while you read *The Screwtape Letters*, a book written from the perspective of Hell but with the intention of bringing us all closer to Heaven.

The goal of The Good and the Beautiful Book Studies is to strengthen both your mind and your heart. This book study is broken into six sections. Complete each section as you read the corresponding letters in the book. Using the book study will give you a greater appreciation for the complex arguments, scriptural insight, and opportunities for personal growth in the story.

Assignments

Mark off the Section 1 activities below as you complete each one in order. When all are completed, you are ready to begin Section 2. See the extra "Group Discussion Questions" page at the end of this book study if working as a group.

- ☐ Read the "Author Study" (pages 2–3).
- ☐ Complete the Vocabulary activity.
- ☐ Read "Introduction to Etymology" and complete the Etymology Exploration activity.
- ☐ Read letters 1 through 5 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- ☐ Complete the Quote Annotation/Explanation activity.
- ☐ Answer the Personal Notebook Response Question.
- ☐ Complete the Scriptural Connection activity.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank. Use the vocabulary key on pages 4–6 when needed.

1. Each day as I walk hungrily by the bakery, the treats in the window _____ me.
2. The school librarians _____ all the books with inappropriate material from the shelves.

3. Despite _____ obstacles, Tara overcame them all to gain an education and eventually become a history professor.
4. That little red berry may seem _____, but it could cause serious illness if ingested.
5. Though he was a _____ and refused to carry a gun, Desmond Doss still served in the army as a medic during World War II.
6. Mariah felt a _____ when she saw the beggar children and so stopped to help them.
7. Her beauty was only _____; on the inside she was selfish and hard-hearted.
8. God heard my _____ in prayer and answered it with a feeling of peace.

Word Bank

expurgated
innocuous
myriad
pacifist

qualm
superficial
supplication
tantalize

Introduction to Etymology

Etymology is a branch of linguistics that studies the history of words and their origins. Because our language has been heavily influenced over hundreds of years by many other languages, including Latin, Greek, French, and German, English etymology is a rich and fascinating field. By tracing the history of a word back through the years, we can discover where it came from and how its usage has morphed or even taken on new meanings.

Let's take the simple example of the word "butler." A butler is traditionally the highest-ranking manservant in a household. When you hear the word, you may think of a



Personal Notebook Response Question

Read the prompt below and write a response (at least 200 words) in your personal notebook.

In letter 11, Screwtape classifies four different types of laughter. Write about a time when you felt true Joy, as Screwtape describes, and love for those around you. Have you ever witnessed his description of Flippancy, either in your own conversations or in those of people around you? How did that make you feel? How can you practice more Joy and less Flippancy in your life?

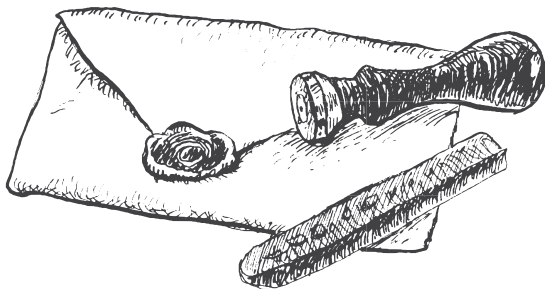


Scriptural Connection

In the New Testament, look up and read 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 7 through 10. Ponder these verses and the information below, and then answer the questions in your personal notebook.

In letter 8, Screwtape tells Wormwood, “some of His special favourites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else.”

? How does this quote apply to Paul? How can understanding this truth help you when you are going through difficult trials?



Section 3 Letters 12-16

Assignments

Mark off the Section 3 activities below as you complete each one in order. See the extra “Group Discussion Questions” page at the end of this book study if working as a group.

- ☐ Complete the Vocabulary and Etymology Exploration activities.
- ☐ Read letters 12 through 16 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- ☐ Complete the Quote Annotation/Explanation activity.
- ☐ Answer the Personal Notebook Response question.
- ☐ Complete the Scriptural Connection activity.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank. Then write your own sentence using each vocabulary word.

1. Stonewall Jackson was famous for his clever _____ to outwit the Union Army.
2. Virginia Woolf was part of a _____ of writers and thinkers known as the Bloomsbury Group.
3. The gas leak down in the mines nearly caused the miners to _____.
4. Look at those big, dark clouds; a thunderstorm is _____.
5. _____ in marriage is essential; spouses should be able to trust each other completely.

Word Bank

asphyxiate
coterie
fidelity

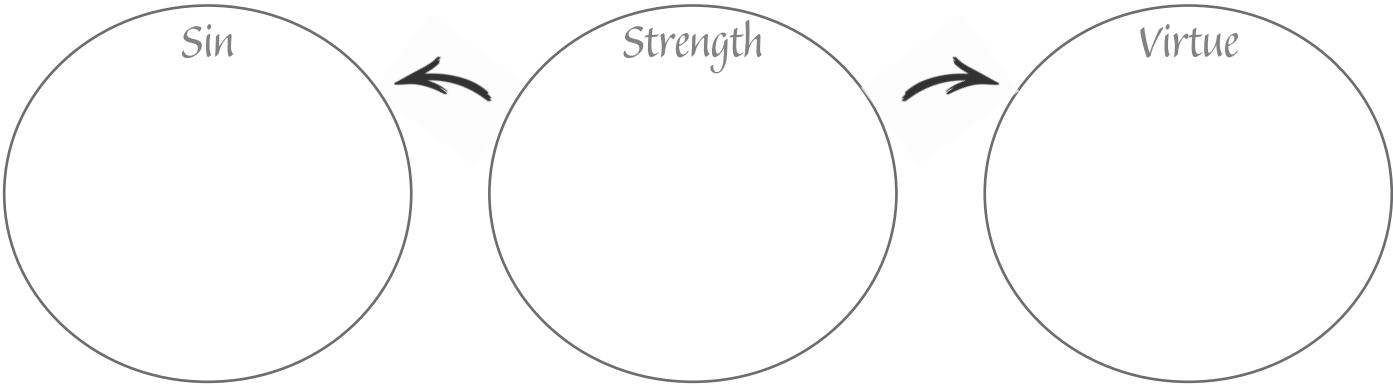
imminent
stratagem

Strengths

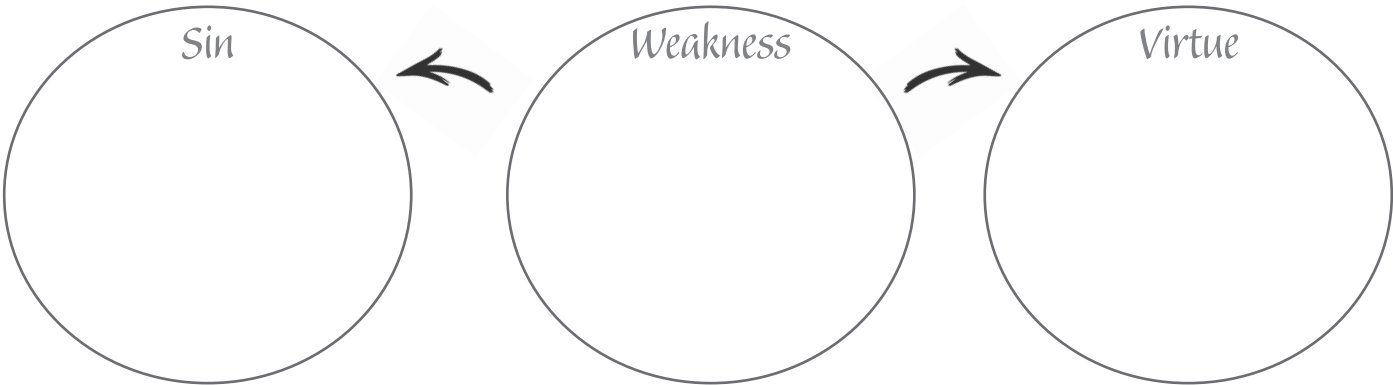
Weaknesses

Distractions

Pick one of the strengths you listed. How could it become a sin? A virtue?



Pick one of the weaknesses you listed. How could it become a sin? A virtue?



Screwtape Letter Writing Assignment

Use the following prompts and guidelines to write your own version of a “Screwtape Letter.”

Now that you have spent many hours reading *The Screwtape Letters* and reflecting on its important lessons, it is your turn to mimic Screwtape’s style and write a letter of your own. Imagine that you are the patient Wormwood has been assigned to tempt. Look back through your personal notebook responses and your brainstorming session. What do you think Wormwood would say about you to his uncle? Which behaviors in your daily life would make Wormwood happy, and which would worry him?

Choose one of the following topics for your letter or make up your own topic:

- Pick one strength and one weakness from the lists you made and imagine Wormwood has told his uncle about them. How would Screwtape encourage Wormwood to turn each into a sin instead of allowing them to become ways for you to serve God and become more humble?

- Pick one of the distractions from the list you made. How would Screwtape advise Wormwood to use that distraction to distance you from God, and what could the eventual consequences be?
- Pick one of your favorite scriptures or scripture stories and turn it into the theme of your letter. (Look back through the “Scriptural Connection” activities for inspiration.)

Your letter should:

- Begin with “My dear Wormwood,” and end with “Your affectionate uncle Screwtape.”
- Be about *you*, “the Patient.”
- Use the inverted language Screwtape uses: “the Enemy” for God, “Our Father Below” for Satan, etc.
- Be at least 500 words.

Optional Bonus Activities

The following activities could help you get more out of your *Screwtape Letters* experience and continue the good habits you’ve started:

- Pick a favorite quote (or several) from the book and turn it into an art project. Write it big on a piece of paper, color it, draw around it, and/or decorate it any way you want. When you’re done, put it somewhere you’ll see it every day as a reminder.
- Choose another book by C. S. Lewis to read, and look for themes and ideas similar to those you encountered in *The Screwtape Letters*. Some of his most popular theological books include *Mere Christianity*, *The Great Divorce*, and *The Problem of Pain*.
- If you enjoyed the “Etymology Exploration” sections of this book study, go off and do some more exploration

on your own! To get you started, the following is a list of words with interesting histories: assassin, clue, dunce, malaria, nimrod, robot, sandwich, tawdry.

- Do some extra research on C. S. Lewis’s group of writer friends, The Inklings. The most famous members include J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield. Consider starting a similar group—a book club, a writers group, an art appreciation club ... Who would you invite? Where would you meet? What would you want to discuss?



Group Discussion Guide

Section 1

1. Some editions of *The Screwtape Letters* include the following two quotes after the dedication page:
“The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn.”—Luther
“The devil ... the prowde spirite ... cannot endure to be mocked.”—Thomas More
 How do these quotes set the tone for what you’re about to read? Why do you think Lewis included them?
2. In the Preface, Lewis states, “Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar.” Why do you think Lewis felt it was important to remind his readers about this fact? Do you think Screwtape is a persuasive voice? Do you ever find yourself believing him or agreeing with him at any point in the book?
3. When you read the Author Study, were you surprised to learn that Lewis had not always been a Christian? What can you learn from his conversion story?

Section 2

1. Read the following quote from letter 10:
“In modern Christian writings, ... I see few of the old warnings about Worldly Vanities, the Choice of Friends, and the Value of Time. All that, your patient would probably classify as ‘Puritanism’—and may I remark in passing that the value we have given to that word is one of the really solid triumphs of the last hundred years? By it we rescue annually thousands of humans from temperance, chastity, and sobriety of life.”

In the book, the devils are always trying to get humans to care more about the appearance of something than the thing itself, the “truth.” They don’t want us to think

in simple terms of right and wrong, good and evil, true and false. How do you see this in the world around you? What are some other Christian ideas or behaviors society has rejected or labeled negatively?

2. Look back through letter 9 and discuss with the group what Screwtape says about the nature of pleasure. What does he mean when he writes, “Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy’s ground”? In what way is Evil, then, dependent on Good?

Section 3

1. In letter 14, Screwtape writes the following:
“He wants each man, in the long run, to be able to recognise all creatures (even himself) as glorious and excellent things. He wants to kill their animal self-love as soon as possible; but it is His long-term policy, I fear, to restore to them a new kind of self-love—a charity and gratitude for all selves, including their own; when they have really learned to love their neighbours as themselves, they will be allowed to love themselves as their neighbours.”

Who in your life has many “glorious and excellent” qualities? What do you admire about this person? How does focusing on a person’s good qualities help you love them more and recognize them as a child of God? And how can recognizing your own gifts and talents help you feel gratitude to God?

2. What do you think of the little glimpses Lewis provides into the devils’ experiences and way of life? For example, in letter 13, Screwtape talks about the “asphyxiating cloud” that prevented Wormwood from attacking his patient one day. Do you find these amusing? Enlightening? Unnerving? Do they add or detract from the rest of the book for you?