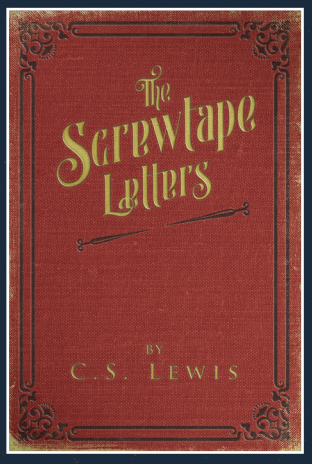
HIGH SCHOOL HONORS

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 5–7)

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"

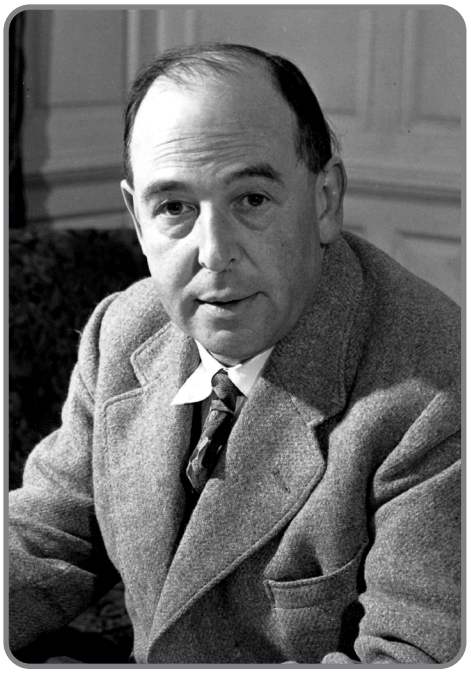
Group Discussion

- 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.

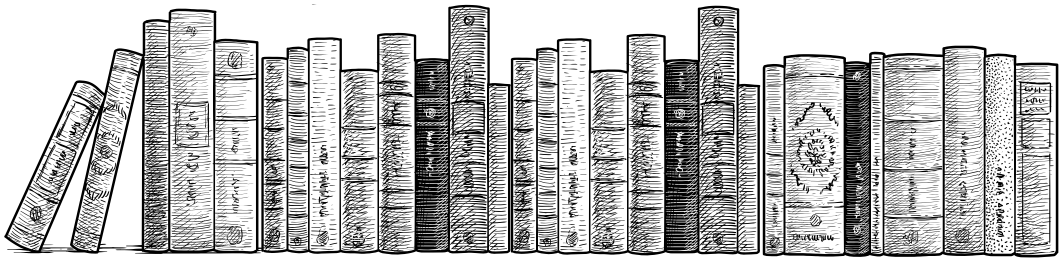
Nearly every week for over a decade, Lewis gathered with a group of literary-minded friends at The Eagle and Child, a pub in Oxford. The group, which included Lewis's dear friend J. R. R. Tolkien, became known as "The Inklings." During these informal meetings, members would discuss wide-ranging topics 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.

rhapsodies [RAP-suh-deez]: a collection of verses, usually from an epic poem; emotional exclamations; ecstasies

The English professor spent each class in rhapsodies about the beauty of Frost's poetry.

scapegoat [SKAYP-goht]: a person who unfairly bears the blame for others

Quarter after quarter of declining sales had company executives searching for a scapegoat.

stratagem [STRA-tuh-jum]: a plan or scheme for deceiving an enemy

Hannah and Max discussed several stratagems for convincing their parents to let them stay up late.

stupor [STEW-pur]: intellectual insensibility; numbness; daze

After a 12-hour shift at the hospital, the nurse fell into a stupor of fatigue.

superficial [soo-pur-FISH-ul]: being on the surface; shallow; not deep or profound

Superficial changes to company policy won't fix the underlying problem of low employee morale.

supplication [suh-pluh-KAY-shun]: an earnest request; humble and earnest prayer in worship

We responded to their supplications by sending food and other disaster-relief supplies.

tantalize [TAN-tul-eyez]: to tease or torment

Tantalized by promises of instant wealth, I unwisely purchased a lottery ticket.

tribulation [trib-yoo-LAY-shun]: suffering caused by hardships or persecution

After much tribulation, the Mayflower Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth Colony in November 1620.

unmitigated [un-MIT-uh-gay-tud]: not softened or lessened

Their fears went unmitigated as hour after hour passed with no sign of a rescue crew.

urbane [ur-BAYN]: refined, polite, and well-mannered

The urbane gentleman delighted his dinner guests with witty stories from his travels.

Word Journal

This vocabulary list does not include every interesting and challenging word in The Screwtape Letters*. When you come across a new word not listed above, write it below and jot down a quick definition.*

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Quote Annotation/Explanation

Annotate the following quotes and write a summary of their main points in your own words. The first example is done for you.



1) Do what you will, there is going to be some benevolence, as well as some malice, in your patient's soul. The great thing is to direct the malice to his immediate neighbours whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he does not know. The malice thus becomes wholly real and the benevolence largely imaginary. (Letter 6)

Benevolence *= the disposition to do good; good will; kindness; charitableness*

Malice *= extreme enmity and ill will; a desire to do evil or cause harm*

All humans have good and bad within them. Satan wants to make the bad within us a real and daily part of our lives and the good within us a vague, happy sort of feeling that we direct to people far from us, such as "the poor" or people suffering in other countries. In that way, the bad will grow and negatively affect people we actually interact with, and the good will become less and less a part of our daily life.

2) All extremes, except extreme devotion to the Enemy, are to be encouraged. … Any small coterie, bound together by some interest which other men dislike or ignore, tends to develop inside itself a hothouse mutual admiration, and towards the outer world, a great deal of pride and hatred … (Letter 7)

3) One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. (Letter 8)

Quote Annotation/Explanation

Annotate the following quotes and write a summary of their main points in your own words.



1) He's vulgar, Wormwood. He has a bourgeois mind. He has filled His world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least … Everything has to be twisted before it's any use to us. We fight under cruel disadvantages. Nothing is naturally on our side. (Letter 22)

2) It is always the novice who exaggerates. … In this new circle your patient is a novice. He is there daily meeting Christian life of a quality he never before imagined … He is anxious (indeed the Enemy commands him) to imitate this quality. Can you get him to imitate this defect in his mistress and to exaggerate it until what was venial in her becomes in him the strongest and most beautiful of the vices—Spiritual Pride? (Letter 24)



Brainstorming

Complete the activity below in your personal notebook or on the brainstorming page provided.

As your final writing assignment of this book study, you will write your own version of a "Screwtape Letter," in which you are the patient the devils are discussing. In preparation for that assignment, spend some time brainstorming. Below are questions to get you thinking. Since this is not a traditional writing assignment, feel free to diagram, make lists, or even draw pictures to help you organize your ideas. The boxes on the next page may help you with this process.

- If Wormwood were observing you daily, what weaknesses do you think he would notice about you? How do you think Screwtape would encourage him to use those weaknesses to pull you away from your Father in Heaven?
- What are some of your strengths or best attributes? How do you think Screwtape would advise Wormwood to turn those strengths to their advantage?
- Screwtape encourages distraction almost more than he encourages actual temptation. What things in your life distract you most from focusing on God and the gospel?

Section 6
Letters 27-31

Assignments

Mark off the Section 6 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 27 through 31 of *The Screwtape Letters*.
- ☐ Complete the Scriptural Connection activity.
- ☐ Complete the Screwtape Letter Writing Assignment.

Vocabulary

Write the correct word in the blank using the word bank. You may have to change the tense or make the word plural.

1. My _____ mother made sure we went to church every Sunday and said our prayers every night.
2. The hologram seemed _____, but my hand went right through it when I tried to touch it.
3. John is newly in love and constantly bursts out in _____ about his girlfriend.
4. Not wanting to seem _____ in biology class, I spent all night researching about DNA.
5. World War I is often described as a war of _____, since both sides lost so many men over years of constant fighting.
6. Ever _____, Jane has been saving for college since she was 12.
7. Watching TV for too long puts the children into a _____.
8. The army _____ its rules and values into new recruits over months of rigorous training.

Word Bank

attrition	**pious**
corporeal	**prudent**
inculcate	**rhapsodies**
obtuse	**stupor**

Etymology Exploration

The Latin root of "corporeal" is "corpus," which means "body." Look up and write down definitions for the words and phrases listed below, which all share the "corpus" root.

corps: _____

_____

corpse: _____

_____

corporation: _____

_____

esprit de corps: _____

_____

habeas corpus: _____

_____

Scriptural Connection

In the New Testament, look up and read Mark chapter 10, verses 17 through 27. Ponder these verses and the information below, and then answer the questions in your personal notebook.

In letter 28, Screwtape writes, *"Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is 'finding his place in it,' while really it is finding its place in him."*

? How do you see this truth played out in the verses about the rich young man? What can you do to knit your heart closer to Christ and further from the things of "the World"?

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?

