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Teacher's Edition
**WALKING
TO WISDOM**

LITERATURE GUIDE SERIES

The Last Battle

C.S. Lewis



by Hannah Eagleson



Inklings Collection



Walking to Wisdom Literature Guide: The Last Battle, Teacher's Edition

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WALKING TO WISDOM LITERATURE GUIDE: *THE LAST BATTLE*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to Students	v
Introduction to Teachers	vi
Scope and Sequence for the Walking to Wisdom Literature Guides: The Inklings Collection	1
The Inklings	2
Daily Reading Outlines for C.S. Lewis's <i>The Last Battle</i>	3
Elements in the Literature Guide	4
Introduction to <i>The Last Battle</i>	6
For Further Biographical Study	6
Tracing the Great Ideas	7
Summarize the Context Essays: <i>Mere Christianity</i> and <i>The Weight of Glory</i> Excerpts	14
Unit 1: Chapters 1-3	19
Make Notes in Your Book • Tracing the Great Ideas • Tell It Back	19
Reading Questions	19
Discussion Questions	21
Life Questions—Journaling Assignment	22
Write Your Own Discussion Questions	23
Unit 2: Chapters 4-6	24
Make Notes in Your Book • Tracing the Great Ideas • Tell It Back	24
Reading Questions	24
Discussion Questions	25
Life Questions—Journaling Assignment	26
Write Your Own Discussion Questions	27
Unit 3: Chapters 7-9	28
Make Notes in Your Book • Tracing the Great Ideas • Tell It Back	28
Reading Questions	28
Discussion Questions	29
Life Questions—Journaling Assignment	30
Write Your Own Discussion Questions	31
Unit 4: Chapters 10-12	32
Make Notes in Your Book • Tracing the Great Ideas • Tell It Back	32
Reading Questions	32
Discussion Questions	33
Life Questions—Journaling Assignment	34
Write Your Own Discussion Questions	35

Unit 5: Chapters 13-14	36
Make Notes in Your Book • Tracing the Great Ideas • Tell It Back	36
Reading Questions	36
Discussion Questions	37
Life Questions—Journaling Assignment	40
Write Your Own Discussion Questions	41
Unit 6: Chapters 15-16	42
Make Notes in Your Book • Tracing the Great Ideas • Tell It Back	42
Reading Questions	42
Discussion Questions	43
Life Questions—Journaling Assignment	45
Write Your Own Discussion Questions	47
Quotation Identification	48
Enrichment Activities	50
Great Ideas Theme-Gathering Essays	51
Great Ideas Theme-Gathering Sample Essays	53
Appendix: Lewis & Tolkien’s View on Myth, and Myth Become Fact	57

INTRODUCTION TO STUDENTS

Dear Students,

We are excited that you have the privilege of reading *The Last Battle* alongside a mentor (the writer of this guide) who will lead you “further up and further in” (C.S. Lewis’s words in *The Last Battle*). We aim to give you a delightful experience with this book and, in the process, to share practices that we have learned that will help you become a good reader:

- reading carefully
- taking time to absorb a book
- paying attention to details as well as to great ideas over the whole book
- learning to mark up a book
- taking a few notes while reading
- learning to ask and answer good questions
- synthesizing those questions together in a piece of writing or an engaging project

If you spend a year doing all of the Inklings courses, you will not only collect some of the most important books and thoughts, but you will also have increased your abilities and pleasures as a reader.

C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Dorothy Sayers (three members of the Inklings whose work you will study in the Walking to Wisdom Literature Guides: The Inklings Collection) wrote nonfiction as well as fiction, and we begin your reading of fiction with a few select nonfiction essays they wrote on topics that overlap with the topics in the book you are reading. Part of their remarkable legacy is that they wrote about many of the same great ideas in stories, plays, and poems and in nonfiction essays. This means that reading the ideas without the stories in these nonfiction works, or “context essays,” will be a significant help to you in understanding them and in fully exploring the characters, plot, and imagery. American writer Flannery O’Connor said, “Our response to life is different if we have been taught only a definition of faith than if we have trembled with Abraham as he held a knife over Isaac.” This is what stories do—they give us an experience of certain knowledge, which is why how we feel about the book is part of what the book is teaching us. We have kept these things in heart and mind while making this guide for you.

We have suggested two reading schedules—one that allows ten days to study the book and the other that allows twenty days. Feel free to double that or add extra time for writing and enrichment activities (found at the end of the book). Your teacher will know what is best for your schedule. We have provided you with some space for answering questions, but we recommend that you also keep your thoughts, notes, and musings in a three-ring binder (or on the computer). For the life questions, you may want to keep a separate journal for meditative contemplation. We would like you to have as much room as you need, because you will find that the Inklings writers require a lot of space! It is highly recommended that you look up unfamiliar words found in C.S. Lewis’s *The Last Battle*, and keep a journal of these new vocabulary words and definitions as you work through the book and the guide.

You have the option of studying one guide or a few, or taking a year to study them all to fulfill your British literature requirement for high school English. Enjoy the study!

INTRODUCTION TO TEACHERS

Dear Teacher,

An editor and an author, both teachers, worked together to create the Walking to Wisdom Literature Guides: The Inklings Collection. Author Hannah Eagleson grew up loving the books featured in these guides, but has also had the chance to study them academically and teach them. After teaching them for a number of years at various levels, she became aware of the repeating themes and deeply shared concerns of these writers. It is truly remarkable that they had such commonality, given that their interests were not only vastly different, but even opposed to the governing literary interests of their own period (modernist). Two Inklings, J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, attended Oxford as students, and also taught there (and met there); several members exchanged letters (collected in volumes); they encouraged one another's work; they were all writing both nonfiction and fiction as well as scholarly work and poetry. This is highly unusual. Many writers write in only one genre, and if they do cross genres, they do not tackle the same ideas there. Tolkien, Sayers, and Lewis all wrote down their ideas in both fiction and nonfiction. This is why we have included essays by each writer, as well as fiction. The fiction includes dramatic literature, short fiction, long fiction, epistolary satire, and allegory. We strongly encourage you to take the year and use this course as a twentieth-century British literature course. If you don't have the time for that, teaching through one guide will tide you over until you can invest more time.

The guides share a similar style and elements, though these are slightly tailored to the literature itself. For instance, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the *The Man Born to Be King* are slightly different in their goals, means, and materials; hence we have tweaked the template slightly according to the book we are studying. We have, in our teaching method, instructed students in taking notes in their books, keeping notes (quotes and page numbers) book-wide on the themes and motifs, answering reading questions (which help them to pay attention to important particulars as they read), and answering discussion questions which tend toward more thematic material. We have taught them to create their own questions, to memorize important quotations, and to write essays after thoroughly digging into the book over the course of several weeks. We have encouraged creative enrichment activities for individuals and groups. Sometimes we cross-reference other books in the Walking to Wisdom Literature Guides: The Inklings Collection in sidebar comments. So you'll see that we believe we are teaching, through these guides, how to read both carefully and syntopically, how to think and make connections, and how to write. But we are also concerned that these books would impact the way your students live—their virtue not only as students, but as human beings.

Modify the Workload

As you approach the questions and assignments, please keep in mind that we have tried to supply you with all you need, but **you are always free to modify or reduce the workload according to the level of your students** or the amount of time that you have to spend on these books. You may reduce the number of questions they answer, and you have the final say on which questions they write and which ones they engage orally. You also are free to assign final projects that fit your needs.

Adapt Your Expectations

We expect your students' answers to these questions to be far less developed than ours, but we also believe that they will be educated critically as they read ours. Hence we see the process of answering the questions and reading our answers as educative. You will probably need to encourage them and to make your expectations clear in terms of how long and developed their answers should be. These expectations will vary according to the level of your students. We wrote these hoping that students as young as seventh grade and as old as twelfth grade would equally benefit, but **the level of your students will require you to adapt the expectations accordingly.**

We have designed these guides with several types of questions. There are reading questions for which answers will certainly be written down as a kind of accountability for students. There are discussion questions which may well only be entertained in conversation, but for which you may also want to sometimes require a written answer as a way of observing what students can build and synthesize on their own in answer to one of these more complex and thorough questions. We have allowed space after discussion questions for students to take some notes and record bullet points and page numbers as they prepare for a discussion of these subjects. We encourage you to require them to be prepared so that they are ready to contribute to fruitful discussions. Also, while students have been given space in the books to respond to questions, they are encouraged to keep a three-ring binder (or to use the computer) to take notes and muse on the material. They are also encouraged to keep a journal of their responses to the life questions for use in meditative contemplation and a journal of new vocabulary words and definitions.

Adjust the Schedule

We have suggested two versions of a daily reading schedule for your convenience only. **Please feel free to adapt the schedule to your student(s) as well.**

We recommend the following Scope and Sequence for the Walking to Wisdom Literature Guides: The Inklings Collection, though you may tailor the order of your reading to your needs and curriculum. Please note that C.S. Lewis read Sayers's play cycle *The Man Born to Be King* each year for the Lenten season.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE FOR THE WALKING TO WISDOM LITERATURE GUIDES: THE INKLINGS COLLECTION

C.S. Lewis

Context Essays (selections from these are read at the beginning of each guide): excerpts from *Mere Christianity*,¹ *The Weight of Glory*,² *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature*,³ and “Theology in Stories” by Gilbert Meilaender⁴

- *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*⁵
- *The Last Battle*⁶
- *The Screwtape Letters*⁷
- *Till We Have Faces*⁸

Dorothy Sayers

Context Essays: excerpts from *Letters to a Diminished Church*⁹

The Man Born to Be King (twelve-play cycle integrating the four gospels)¹⁰

J.R.R. Tolkien

- *The Fellowship of the Ring*¹¹
- *The Two Towers*¹²
- *The Return of the King*¹³

-
1. The Walking to Wisdom Literature Guides: The Inklings Collection is keyed to the following editions listed in these footnotes: C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).
 2. C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).
 3. C.S. Lewis *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature* (San Diego: Harcourt Books, 1966).
 4. Gilbert Meilaender, “Theology in Stories: C.S. Lewis and the Narrative Quality of Experience,” *Word and World* 1/3 (1981): 222, <http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/1-3_Experience/1-3_Meilaender.pdf>.
 5. C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).
 6. Lewis, *Chronicles*.
 7. C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).
 8. C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1980).
 9. Dorothy Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004).
 10. Dorothy Sayers, *The Man Born to Be King: A Play-Cycle on the Life of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Written for Broadcasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1943). Reprinted with permission by Classical Academic Press, 2014.
 11. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2005).
 12. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2005).
 13. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2005).

THE INKLINGS

The Inklings was an informal literary discussion group associated with the University of Oxford, England, for nearly two decades between the early 1930s and late 1949.¹ The Inklings were writers, including C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers, and Charles Williams, who shared a love of similar stories and a remarkable commitment to ideas they shared. Their literary philosophies tended to depart from the period in which they were writing (modernist, 1900–1950), as did their cultural values. They liked to walk together and meet regularly to read their work aloud to one another.

“Properly speaking,” wrote Warren Lewis (brother of C.S.), “the Inklings was neither a club nor a literary society, though it partook of the nature of both. There were no rules, officers, agendas, or formal elections.”² While Dorothy Sayers did not attend the meetings herself, partly because she didn’t live in the same town or teach at Oxford, she is often claimed as an Inklings, as a friend of Lewis and Charles Williams. Her correspondence with both was avid and their work concerned with many of the same subjects, characters, and plots. They were a great encouragement to one another. Lewis even read Sayers’s play cycle, *The Man Born to Be King* (one of our series), each year during the Lenten period.

Readings and discussions of the members’ unfinished works were the principal purposes of meetings. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, Lewis’s *Out of the Silent Planet*, and Williams’s *All Hallows’ Eve* were among the first novels the Inklings read to each other. Tolkien’s fictional Notion Club (see *Sauron Defeated*) was based on the Inklings. Meetings were not all serious; the Inklings amused themselves by having competitions to see who could read notoriously bad prose for the longest without laughing.³

Until late 1949, Inklings readings and discussions usually occurred during Thursday evenings in C.S. Lewis’s college rooms at Magdalen College. The Inklings and friends were also known to gather informally on Tuesdays at midday at a local public house, The Eagle and Child.

We hope that you will keep the spirit of the Inklings alive in your own study of this guide by working out your own responses to their work in community and conversation as well as laboring over your writing and sharing it with fellow travelers seeking to walk a similar path. Consider studying this course online at Scholé Academy (classicalacademicpress.com/online-courses/).

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1. Clyde S. Kilby and Marjorie Lamp Mead, eds., *Brothers and Friends: The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 230.
 2. Bruce L. Edwards, *Apologist, Philosopher, and Theologian*, vol. 3 of *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 279.
 3. “War of Words over World’s Worst Writer,” *Culture Northern Ireland*, May 9, 2008, <http://www.culturenorthernireland.org/article/1739/war-of-words-over-world-s-worst-writer?search=inklings&crpg=1>.

DAILY READING OUTLINES FOR C.S. LEWIS'S *THE LAST BATTLE*

Schedule 1^A

This schedule requires you to read two to three chapters per day of *The Last Battle* for six days, in addition to the context essays. Your teacher may give you still more time by adding a day or two to each segment.

Day 1: Context essay excerpts from *Mere Christianity*: “The Law of Human Nature” and “Is Christianity Hard or Easy?”

Day 2: Context essay excerpts from *Mere Christianity*: “Hope” and “Faith” (book 3, chapter 11)

Day 3: Context essay excerpt from *The Weight of Glory*: “The Weight of Glory”

Day 4: If necessary, finish “The Weight of Glory.” Read the context essay excerpt from *Mere Christianity*: “Time and beyond Time”

Day 5: Chapters 1–3

Day 6: Chapters 4–6

Day 7: Chapters 7–9

Day 8: Chapters 10–12

Day 9: Chapters 13–14

Day 10: Chapters 15–16

Your teacher will take as many extra days as needed to work on essay and enrichment activities.

Schedule 2

This schedule requires you to read one chapter per day for sixteen days, in addition to the context essays.

Day 1: Context essay excerpts from *Mere Christianity*: “The Law of Human Nature” and “Is Christianity Hard or Easy?”

Day 2: Context essay excerpts from *Mere Christianity*: “Hope” and “Faith” (book 3, chapter 11)

Day 3: Context essay excerpt from *The Weight of Glory*: “The Weight of Glory”

Day 4: If necessary, finish “The Weight of Glory.” Read the context essay excerpt from *Mere Christianity*: “Time and beyond Time”

Day 5: Chapter 1

Day 6: Chapter 2

Day 7: Chapter 3

Day 8: Chapter 4

Day 9: Chapter 5

Day 10: Chapter 6

Day 11: Chapter 7

Day 12: Chapter 8

Day 13: Chapter 9

Day 14: Chapter 10

Day 15: Chapter 11

Day 16: Chapter 12

Day 17: Chapter 13

Day 18: Chapter 14

Day 19: Chapter 15

Day 20: Chapter 16

^AWhile we have estimated the reading time in several schedules to the best of our ability, student reading speeds and classroom goals will differ. The amount of time you will need to complete the writing and discussion work of the literature guides alongside the reading will likely double the amount of time you use. This will vary according to the goals of the teacher and the development of the student(s).

Your teacher will take as many extra days as needed to work on essay and enrichment activities.

ELEMENTS IN THE LITERATURE GUIDE

Make Notes: Possess the Book

Becoming a reader is all about learning to pay attention and gather the details to relish and realize the significance and unity of what you are reading. Try using these symbols or making up your own system that covers the same basics. Underline interesting passages. Write in the margins so that you can go back to reference what you wrote to make your Great Ideas Quote pages, answer questions, hold discussions, and support points you make in your writing assignments. The following is a simple marking system that we have found effective:

- * This is important or delightful.
- ? I have a question.
- ?? I'm confused.
- ! This is surprising or exciting to me.
- T This could relate to one of the themes or motifs of the book.
- ✓ This relates to something else I have read.
- X This is part of the conflict or the problem of the story.
- C This is significant in defining this character.

Tracing the Great Ideas

As you read, choose quotes related to the six given great ideas topics (or themes) so that you can trace them all the way through the book. (Please remember that you are welcome to find your own great ideas themes in addition to ours.) Then be on the lookout for how they are worked out in each particular context. Some chapters may contain quotes relating to only one great ideas topic, or may contain several topics. Write the quotes on the Great Ideas Quotes pages. See page 7 for an example of how to record the quotations. At the end of the guide you will reflect upon the themes of the course and choose one from which you will develop an argumentative essay. You may use our great idea definition for your essay's thesis or create a thesis of your own.

Great Ideas

Friendship: Serving one another and bearing difficult times in fellowship is one of the sweetest pleasures and gifts. Even, and perhaps especially, in dark times the faithful love of friends is an essential element in the good life. When two creatures use each other and call it friendship it is evil. We play a role in the beauty and ugliness of our fellow creatures.

Utopian visions versus the Old Narnia/Aslan's country: Utopia refers to an ideal place or state or to any visionary system of political or social perfection. Dystopia is what often happens to a place where someone has imposed his ideal vision on others. This has happened in history and it happens in Narnia. The old Narnia is swallowed up in one creature's idea of what is ideal for himself, which he imposes on the land.

Courage and nobility: While we are not able to control the times in which we live, the only thing shameful is not fighting the long defeat. Courage has to do with facing difficulty, danger, and pain. It comes from the Latin word for heart—*cor*. Nobility has to do with exalted, principled, and honorable behavior in the face of said difficulty.

Truth and lies: Lies have a close relationship to the truth; they twist what is true and use it as part of their claim. Sorting out the difference requires wisdom, stories, friendship, conviction, and courage.

Stories and history: Stories, which are often about the past, are essential to reminding us what is true, and help us to hold it close in dark and unhappy times.

Longing and the transcendent¹: Our longing for the good and our sense that the ultimate good (in this case, Aslan) is real are central to our friendships and the way that we conduct ourselves in difficult times. All of us have a longing for that which is beyond, and respond in one way or another to our encounters with holiness.

Tell It Back

This is a summary exercise, a method of narrating the chapters orally, or “telling it back.” It is a wonderful option that allows you to narrate the content of each unit by oral summary—with or without a partner(s). Others have acted it out with props or sock puppets. This is a basic element of learning to read which never loses its delight and capacity to delight others. It also helps to develop a strong mental outlining ability and memory.

(Optional) We like it when people make their own illustrations for a book to enter more fully into the lives of the characters. Feel free to do so as you make your way through the book, as a chapter unit summary exercise, or afterward, when you have finished. How you feel about the book and what you are able to imagine about the book is part of what it is teaching you. Tolkien made drawings for many of his own characters.

Reading Questions

Reading questions encourage close reading of the text by asking comprehension questions. All answers are found in the text.

Discussion Questions

Discussion questions require you to synthesize the main ideas of the text that may be either explicitly or implicitly stated. Your answers to these should explain Lewis’s perspective, not your own. Depending on your level, learning needs, or preference, the in-depth discussion questions may be written as short answers (one to two paragraphs), discussed with the teacher/fellow students, or simply read to inspire critical thinking.

Life Questions—Journaling Assignment

It’s difficult to read any of C.S. Lewis’s writing without thinking about applying his ideas to your own life. *The Last Battle* is no exception. After each reading section, several “life questions” help you reflect on your own personal experiences and examine your own life in light of ideas from *The Last Battle*. You may write informal responses to the life questions in a separate journal.

Write Your Own Discussion Questions

At the end of each section, create two discussion questions that you think would make for good discussion among classmates, friends, and family. These should not chiefly be questions that have a sentence-long answer, but rather questions that would stimulate a longer exchange of ideas. Use our discussion questions and life questions as guides for writing yours.

1. *Transcendence* comes from the Latin prefix *trans-*, meaning “beyond,” and the word *scandere*, meaning “to climb.” When you achieve transcendence, you have gone beyond ordinary limitations. The word is often used to describe a spiritual or religious state or reality, or a condition of moving beyond physical needs and realities (<http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/transcendence>).

INTRODUCTION TO *THE LAST BATTLE*

The Last Battle is the final story of The Chronicles of Narnia. In it, C.S. Lewis imagines the end of the world for Narnia. As an apocalyptic story (one about the end of the world), *The Last Battle* is shaped by several elements. One is the tension between alternate visions of the world, especially the technological utopia that Shift the Ape and many of the Calormene soldiers seem to want, and the Narnia that Aslan created and ultimately restores in his own country. Another is the sense of courage and nobility put to the test by the degradation of a world falling apart in the face of dishonesty and evil. In addition, the importance of stories and history is clear as the characters look to the stories of Narnia's history to give them courage and hope. Finally, the book describes a crucial experience of confronting the transcendent in Aslan. The word "transcendent" refers to something beyond mortal experience, which in Aslan's case is something so incredibly beautiful and desirable that it shatters all previous experience and satisfies our deepest longings.

As you read, pay attention to the alternate visions of the world being offered. Shift the Ape desires a technological utopia, a Narnia in which the strength of the creatures is harnessed to produce things for Calormen and to make money, in which nature is replaced by human artifice, and in which exotic imports such as oranges and bananas are readily available. King Tirian and Jewel the Unicorn desire a Narnia like the one readers have known in the other books, a place where forests and streams are celebrated and the creatures are free to pursue their lives under the kind authority of good kings and queens and ultimately of Aslan himself. At the end of the book, we meet a fuller-yet vision of the world in Aslan's country.

In response to the degraded vision of the world encouraged by Shift the Ape, the virtue of characters such as Tirian and Jewel shines bright. Shift wants a world in which trees are cut down and animals whipped to produce more money, and in which a few selfish masters profit from the enslavement of most of the creatures of Narnia. The old Narnia is terribly defiled by the things that Shift and many of the Calormene leaders choose to do. But the virtues of characters such as Tirian and Jewel and many of the small animals of Narnia show more clearly against this background of degradation. They remain noble even when they are sorely tested, and they are willing to give their lives if necessary for the pursuit of good. Especially evident are the virtues of friendship, courage, and commitment to truth. The characters fight for these good things even though it seems hopeless in most of the book. They commit to what Tolkien calls "the long defeat," the choice to keep fighting for good even if it seems hopeless.¹

One thing that helps the virtuous characters to be courageous is remembering the stories of Narnia. Revisiting Narnia's history helps them to recall what they love about Narnia, and to have hope that Aslan will help them. Recounting the stories of the past provides delight and hope in very dark times.

When the stories are proved true and Aslan does come, the characters confront one of the most central experiences Lewis describes in the Narnia books. They come face to face with the transcendent or numinous and recognize that they have always had a longing for it. The word "numinous" comes from a word meaning "spirit" or "god," and it refers to a category of beings that is beyond human experience. In Lewis's work, the transcendent or numinous is most fully present in the glory of God, represented in the Narnia books by the lion Aslan. The experience of the transcendent brings people to a kind of holy fear or reverence, but also a deep delight. It satisfies their deepest longings, sometimes longings they knew but didn't understand themselves until finding them met in Aslan.

For Further Biographical Study

Please see the following resource: <http://www.cslewis.org/resource/chronocsl/>. This website—created by the C.S. Lewis Foundation—suggests and links to a number of excellent sources.

1. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2005), 443.

TRACING THE GREAT IDEAS

You may record your Great Ideas Quotes on the pages that follow or you may want to consider placing copies of the Great Ideas Quotes pages in a three-ring notebook at the beginning of your guide work to keep a “map” of your reading.

You should feel free to shorthand quotes by listing the quote’s beginning and end, then its page number, on the proper Great Ideas Quotes page.

Examples:

Great Ideas Quotes throughout the book for the theme *Friendship*

“Shift had one friend and neighbor who was a donkey called Puzzle. At least they both said they were friends, but from the way things went on you might have thought Puzzle was more like Shift’s servant than his friend.” (669)

shorthand version:

“Shift had one friend. . . . Puzzle was more like Shift’s servant.” (669)

About King Tirian and Jewel the Unicorn:

“There was no one with him that spring morning except his dearest friend, Jewel the Unicorn. They loved each other like brothers and each had saved the other’s life in the wars.” (675)

shorthand version:

“Tirian and Jewel loved each other like brothers.” (675)

When Eustace, Jill, and Tirian are planning in the tower:

“All three of them agreed that the very first thing they must do was to go back to Stable Hill and try to rescue Jewel the Unicorn.” (699)

shorthand version:

“Go back . . . try to rescue Jewel.” (699)

Note that this quotation does not say anything directly about friendship, but it clearly shows that friends make each other’s well-being a central commitment.

GREAT IDEAS QUOTES THROUGHOUT THE BOOK FOR THE THEME *FRIENDSHIP*

“There is no need for both of us to go’ . . . ‘What life is left for me?’” (682)

“‘Kiss me, Jewel’ . . . ‘no other death than the one we go to.’” (721)

“Shift had one friend and neighbor who was a donkey called Puzzle. At least they both said they were friends, but from the way things went on you might have thought Puzzle was more like Shift’s servant than his friend.” (669)

About King Tirian and Jewel the Unicorn:

“There was no one with him that spring morning except his dearest friend, Jewel the Unicorn. They loved each other like brothers and each had saved the other’s life in the wars.” (675)

When Eustace, Jill, and Tirian are planning in the tower:

“All three of them agreed that the very first thing they must do was to go back to Stable Hill and try to rescue Jewel the Unicorn.” (699)

Note that this quotation does not say anything directly about friendship, but it clearly shows that friends make each other’s well-being a central commitment.

“Is Christianity Hard or Easy?” Summary (from *Mere Christianity*, Book 4, Chapter 8)

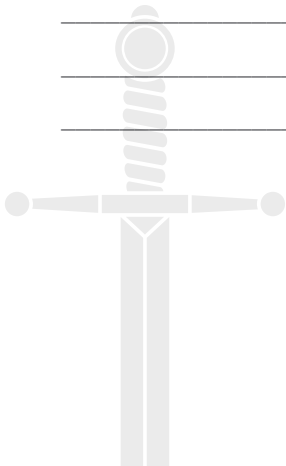
In this essay, Lewis says that the central action of Christianity is “putting on Christ” or becoming like Him. He says that if we are just trying to behave morally, we will be constantly unsatisfied. We will try grudgingly to be moral, while at the same time hoping that our natural desires can still be satisfied. This never works, because being moral demands more than we can give in our natural abilities. Lewis says that the Christian way is both harder and easier. Christ has not come to torment our natural self, but to kill it. He says that if we hand over the whole self and let Christ give us a new one, we will in fact get Christ Himself, and His will shall become ours. This act is incredibly hard, because to give the whole self away is terrifying. But it is also so much easier because it is a transformation of the whole self, and our efforts to be good will not be coming from our naturally imperfect fallen selves but from the new self God is giving us. Lewis says that this is hard, but the sort of compromise we are all wanting is harder. We are like eggs at present. It is hard for an egg to turn into a bird, but much harder for it to fly while remaining an egg. We cannot go on as eggs—we will have to be hatched or go bad.

“Hope” Summary (from *Mere Christianity*, Book 3, Chapter 10)

Lewis says that hope is a virtue that looks forward to the next world, and that it is not a form of escapism or wishful thinking but one of the things Christians are supposed to do. He points out that the Christians who have done the most in this world are the ones who are most excited about the future world. He says that we long for something beyond this world, and however good the things we yearn for, they are not enough to satisfy that longing. He says that the foolish way to deal with this inconsolable longing is to blame the good things we are given in life and to keep rushing from one to the other in the hope of satisfying a longing that is beyond the world. He says that another way is to settle down and cease to hope, and that is better for those around us but misses the possibility that infinite happiness really is waiting for us. He says the Christian way is to be thankful for the earthly blessings we are given, but to keep hoping for the world beyond them which will satisfy our deepest longings with God’s presence.

“Faith” Summary (from *Mere Christianity*, Book 3, Chapter 11)

Lewis says that he used to be puzzled when people called faith a virtue, since he could not see how believing or not believing a set of statements could be virtuous. But he realized that it is easy for us to stop believing something not because the evidence for it has been disproved but because it is inconvenient to us in a given set of circumstances. He says that faith is the art of holding on to things your reason has accepted, in spite of changing moods. He goes on to illustrate the results of believing this way by describing how part of faith is seriously attempting to practice Christianity. When we do this, he says, we realize that we fail consistently, and that even if we succeeded, God would not owe us anything, since He gave us all the abilities with which we obey when we do. He uses the example of a child who asks his father for sixpence and then buys a birthday present for the father. The father is pleased with the gift, but he is still sixpence none the richer.



“The Weight of Glory” Summary (from *The Weight of Glory*, Essay 1)

“The Weight of Glory” is Lewis’s keystone essay that begins by describing how the promise of reward does not invalidate the claims of Christianity. Lewis describes the significance of a reward whose object is proper to the desire (a general who fights for victory vs. money) and explains how our understanding of the object of our longing develops. In us desire begins as a wish to go to heaven and migrates to a desire for glory—that of the loving approval of our God as well as sheer radiance itself. In this essay Lewis makes reference to the inconsolable longing that we all have for an object we aren’t entirely sure of; elsewhere he uses the German word *sehnsucht* to try to get a handle on this slippery fish. He calls it a “desire which no natural happiness will satisfy,” not yet attached to its proper object.

Hence we go in search of this desire and attach our depth of longing to various objects—whether it be a person or a thing that has brought us this sensation of longing. For Lewis this included a tin garden (planetarium) when he was a child that brought him, inexplicably, the enormous bliss of Eden. He argues that these experiences of joy still include the feeling of a “chasm that yawns between us and reality”: the sense that though we long for total union with the object of our desire, we are outside it, and cannot reach it. These feelings, he insists, suggest that we are dimly conscious that heaven with God our Creator and Redeemer awaits us—that we can’t long for something that doesn’t exist. If we can conceive of a thing, we are likely made for that thing but not fully involved in it yet.

Our neighbor is the experience of the eternal that we have now. We are to take on the glory of our neighbor, to realize that the way we relate to that person will determine whether she moves toward godlikeness or monster-likeness, that this person is eternal and the closest thing we have to God and being in the presence of God now. There are no ordinary people. We experience the Savior through the live human beings we love now. Our unsatisfied longing comes closest to its satisfaction in relation to those around us. We can take heart when we experience the desire which goes unsatisfied—it means we are made for more—for God’s pleasure, for union with God—and we will have it.

UNIT 1: CHAPTERS 1–3



Make Notes in Your Book

Don't forget to make notes in your book!



Tracing the Great Ideas

Find quotes in these chapters that relate to the great ideas, or themes. Write down the quote with its page number on the corresponding Great Ideas Quotes pages provided (at the beginning of this guide). Keeping track of quotes will help you write the final theme essay(s)!

Example quotes and their themes:

Great Ideas Quotes throughout the book for the theme *Friendship*

“Shift had one friend. . . . Puzzle was more like Shift’s servant” (669)

“Tirian and Jewel loved each other like brothers” (675)



Tell It Back

Do an oral summary of your reading on a recording device or to another human being. Narrate the most important events in order while sharing the elements of the characters’ development that are important.

Reading Questions

1. What word is mentioned in the first phrase of the first sentence of chapter 1, and again in the first phrase of the first sentence of chapter 2 (besides “Narnia”)? To expand your answer, consider the significance of this repetition.

The word “last” is mentioned in both phrases (669, 675).

If you wish to expand on this answer, you can mention that the repetition of “last” here emphasizes the nature of the novel as a story of the end of something.

2. After Tirian and Jewel kill the Calormenes who are abusing the talking horse, Tirian is remorseful. What reason does he give for feeling sorrowful?

He says that they attacked the Calormenes while they were unarmed and unaware (681), and he implies that this was a gravely wrong thing to do. He and Jewel should have given the Calormenes the chance to get weapons and face them in fair combat.

3. How does Shift the Ape define freedom when he is talking to the Narnians about working for the Tisroc?

He says that the Narnians think freedom means doing what they want, and that they are wrong (685). He says that true freedom means doing what Shift tells them. This definition is patently ridiculous, so it's no wonder the bear cannot follow it in the next line.



Discussion Questions

1. The first three chapters present two very different models of friendship. How does the friendship between Shift the Ape and Puzzle the Donkey contrast with the friendship between Tirian the King and Jewel the Unicorn?

The relationship between Shift and Puzzle is not a true friendship. As Lewis, speaking as the narrator, tells us on page 669, “from the way things went on you might have thought Puzzle was more like Shift’s servant than his friend.” Shift expects Puzzle to do most of the work in the relationship. Shift also manipulates Puzzle into doing things that Puzzle doesn’t want to do, in some cases very dangerous things, like fetching the lion’s skin from the pool of water (670–671).

2. Shift talks Puzzle into going to the market at Chippingford to look for oranges or bananas. Why is it not surprising that Chippingford does not have any oranges or bananas, and what does the request for them suggest about Shift?

See pages 672–673. It is not surprising that Chippingford is not selling oranges and bananas because they are tropical fruits, and Narnia is not a tropical climate. Shift’s desire for them suggests that he is dissatisfied with normal Narnian life and wants to bring in products from elsewhere to make it more interesting to him. While importing things could certainly be good in many situations, in Shift’s case the reader may be inclined to see it as a sign of discontent, since Shift already seems like a character who wants more and more.

Tropical fruit would also be associated with industrialization in the time Lewis is writing, since it became easier to get such exotic produce to England because of faster industrialized ships. Narnia by its nature is not an industrialized place, and the thought of it becoming more industrial is distressing to true Narnians who remember how things once were and how they should be, as well as to readers who have grown attached to this land. The change is particularly obvious in chapters 2 and 3, in which an ugly road is cut through Lantern Waste (679) and animals are to be sent to Calormen to work (684).

3. When Jewel and the King have given themselves up and they are listening to Shift speak about the way things will be changing in Narnia, what finally moves Tirian to cry out that Shift the Ape is lying?

Tirian is moved to cry out because Shift says that Tash and Aslan are the same.

Tirian sees that the Narnians are terribly sad, and he wants to tell them that Aslan and Tash are different. Though Tirian is stopped before he can say this, Lewis (with the voice of the narrator) tells us that Tirian “meant to go on and ask how the terrible god Tash who fed on the blood of his people could possibly be the same as the good Lion by whose blood all Narnia was saved” (686). Tirian sees how impossible it is that a god who devours others can be the same as a God who gives Himself for others. It is the terrible misrepresentation of Aslan, suggesting that he could behave as Tash does, that moves Tirian to protest. Truth is centrally important to Tirian and to the concept of virtue in *The Last Battle*. It is the violation of truth, and truth about Aslan, that is so terrible.

Life Questions—Journaling Assignment

Feel free to respond to the life questions here or to keep them in a separate journal used for meditative contemplation.

1. What are some examples of true friendship in your own life? How are they like the friendship between Tirian and Jewel? How are they different (since true friendships can be good in different ways)?

Answers will vary.

UNIT 2: CHAPTERS 4–6



Make Notes in Your Book



Tracing the Great Ideas



Tell It Back

Reading Questions

1. Who comes to help Tirian when he is tied to the tree?

Small animals such as a rabbit and mice come to help Tirian (687–689).

If you wish to expand on this answer, you could mention that there may be an echo here of the scene from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in which the mice come and chew away the ropes that bind Aslan to the stone table. Often in Narnia, the small animals have a great role to play, and in their humility and service to others they do great good.

2. When Tirian, Jill, and Eustace are navigating the woods, who turns out to be the best pathfinder among them?

Jill proves to be the best pathfinder in the group (700).

3. Tirian, Eustace, and Jill all agree on the very first thing they need to do after preparing themselves to take on Shift. What is it?

They agree that the first thing is to try to rescue Jewel the Unicorn (699).

If you wish to expand on this answer, you could mention that this again underlines the importance of friendship in this book. The first thing that matters is to rescue their friend, even in such a dire time for Narnia.

Discussion Questions

1. What gives Tirian hope when he is tied to the tree? Is his cry for help answered?

See pages 690–693. Tirian begins to think about the history of Narnia. He remembers the stories of Rilian and Caspian, who were helped by children from another world, and he remembers the story of how some of those children defeated the White Witch. He also remembers that Aslan was a part of those stories, and he cries to Aslan for help.

His cries are answered, and he sees the children from the other world in some sort of dream or vision. Just after he wakes, Jill and Eustace arrive to help him.

If you wish to expand on this answer, you could emphasize the importance of stories in Narnia, both because they are full of delight in themselves, and as a way of remembering how Aslan has been present for Narnia in the past.



2. When Tirian ties up the Calormene sentry, what does he say? What does Tirian's language tell us about the last king of Narnia?

See page 702. Tirian apologizes in courtly language: "I have done thee some discourtesy, soldier." He says that he was in need and hopes that if they meet again he may be able to do a better turn for the man.

Tirian's language and attitude here show his nobility and his training in courtesy. Even when addressing an enemy, he apologizes for the necessity of tying him up and hopes that something better may happen between them eventually. He recognizes the man's dignity as a person and a soldier, even if he is an enemy.

3. At the end of the chapter, Tirian is so hopeful that he is moved to laughter. What gives him hope? How does his hope affect everyone else?

See page 704. Tirian now knows the truth. All the false things that Shift was saying about Aslan are disproved, and because Puzzle is with them, Tirian has evidence of Shift's dishonesty. He is hopeful because he expects that the truth will give courage to the Narnians, and that justice will be restored.

Tirian's hope and courage put heart into the others in the group. As the narrator notes, "When you have been whispering for hours the mere sound of anyone talking out loud has a wonderfully stirring effect." The others begin to laugh and talk aloud as well.

Life Questions—Journaling Assignment

Feel free to respond to the life questions here or to keep them in a separate journal used for meditative contemplation.

1. What would you do if you found yourself in another world?

Answers will vary.



2. Have you ever cried out intensely for God's help? What happened?

Answers will vary.

Write Your Own Discussion Questions

1. _____

2. _____



UNIT 3: CHAPTERS 7–9



Make Notes in Your Book



Tracing the Great Ideas



Tell It Back

Reading Questions

1. What answer does Tirian give when the Calormene guard asks him for the password?

See page 706. He says, “The light is dawning, the lie broken.”

2. What does Eustace tell Puzzle about being clever?

See page 713. Eustace suggests that Puzzle should have spent less time saying he wasn't clever, and more time being as clever as he could.

3. What season is it? Does the season remind you of anything from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, which began The Chronicles of Narnia series?

See page 715. It is spring. Tirian and his friends notice that it is the first really warm day of that spring. This section of *The Last Battle* may echo the spring that thaws out Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

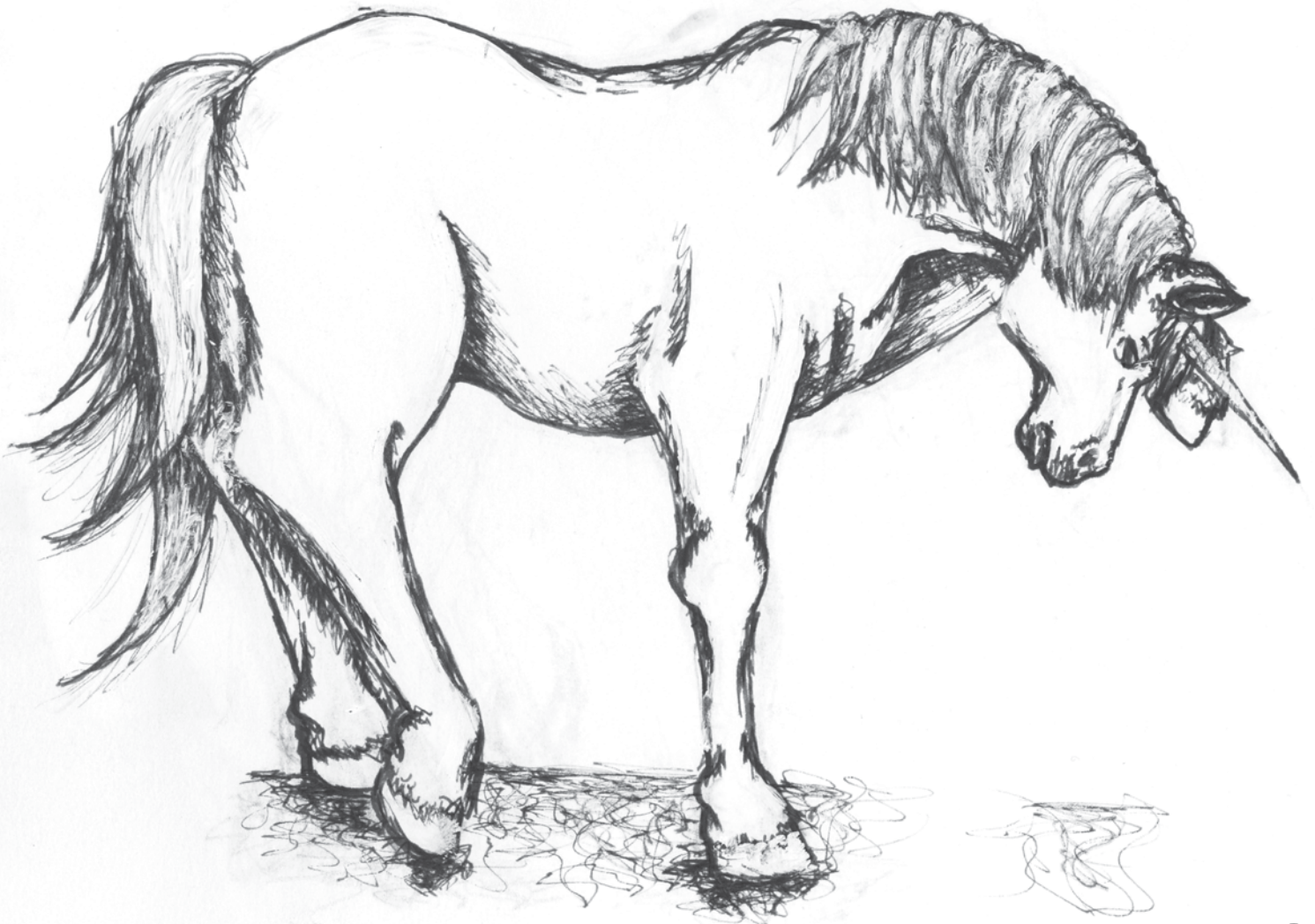
To expand this thought, review the contrasting metaphors of winter (lifelessness, darkness, spiritual deadness) and spring (new life, light, joy), and the change Aslan brings to Narnia with his arrival in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Discussion Questions

1. Jill says that it is a pity that so much is always happening in Narnia, and she wishes for more restful and beautiful adventures in Narnia, rather than the distressing kind. What does the unicorn tell her? Why is what he says important?

See pages 715–716. Jewel tells Jill that the children are called to Narnia when it needs help, but that in between those times there have been thousands of years of peace. He tells her the stories of “whole centuries in which all Narnia was so happy that notable dances and feasts, or at most tournaments, were the only things that could be remembered, and every day and week had been better than the last.”

The peaceful and good times are no less a part of Narnia’s history than the times of distress and battle. The restful times define what is really important about the place, and what is worth celebrating and fighting to protect. These times are worth remembering, and it is right that the picture of them “piled up in Jill’s mind till it was rather like looking down from a high hill on to a rich, lovely plain full of woods and waters and cornfields, which spread away and away till it got thin and misty from a distance.”



2. What is Jill’s response to these stories of good times in Narnia’s history? What does Jewel tell her?

Jill wishes that “those good, ordinary times” will go on forever. She says, “Our world is going to have an end someday. Perhaps this one won’t.” Jewel answers that all worlds draw to an end, except Aslan’s own country (716).

Jill’s answer touches on a theme Lewis explores again and again: our desire for something good that will last forever. Lewis often describes us as not at home in the time-bound world, as longing for something beyond time that will satisfy our desire for eternity.

This would be a good time to bring in reflections from the context essay students read on “Hope” from *Mere Christianity* (see page 15).

3. Shift and the other people trying to deceive the Narnians tell a dishonest version of the story of the lion skin. Why do they do this?

They know that it is a possibility someone will bring Puzzle out and tell the truth about their ruse. In preparation for that, they tell their own version of the story first. This is a terribly unscrupulous and very effective decision. Jill thinks that “By mixing a little truth with it they had made their lie far stronger” (723). The people who still believe in Aslan will now have a much harder time convincing others of the truth.

Life Questions—Journaling Assignment

Feel free to respond to the life questions here or to keep them in a separate journal used for meditative contemplation.

1. Is it true in your experience that lies are more dangerous when there is a bit of truth in them? Why do you think that is?

Answers will vary.

2. What are good and peaceful and ordinary times you have experienced in your life? What would you hope for in good and ordinary times?

Answers will vary.

Write Your Own Discussion Questions

1.

2.

