



C. S. Lewis and *The
Chronicles of Narnia*

Early Life

- Clive Staples Lewis (called Jack) born in 1898, grew up in Belfast in an old house filled with books
- Mother died of cancer in 1908, and he and his brother Warren were sent to boarding school by his controlling father
- Sought refuge in books, mythology, and the creation of a world he called Animal-Land
- Became an atheist at school

Oxford and the Inklings

- › Served in the British military from 1917-18, injured by friendly fire; then read English and philosophy at Oxford
- › Became lecturer in medieval English literature at Magdalen College
- › Gathered circle of like-minded friends and scholars, including J. R. R. Tolkien, establishing a loose club that called themselves the Inklings, who all read each others' work
- › Tolkien and another member of the group, Hugo Dyson, convinced Lewis of the truth of Christianity and the Christian myth during an all-night discussion and walk

The Power of Myth

- ‘What Dyson and Tolkien showed me was this: that if I met the idea of sacrifice in a pagan [myth] I didn’t mind it all... the reason was that in pagan stories I was prepared to feel the myth as profound and suggestive of meanings beyond my grasp even though I could not say in cold prose “what it meant”. Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference, that it really happened.’
- Allegory important to Lewis as a way of conveying the power of Christian stories in emotionally accessible form: ‘Suppose that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency?’

Christian Apologetics

- Lewis became a highly popular Christian writer and speaker; BBC Radio series 'Mere Christianity'; books like *The Screwtape Letters*
- Believed strongly in universal morality and the importance of free will, especially the idea that God cannot force us to be good
- Used fantasy, satire, and humour as a 'through the backdoor' approach to presenting Christian morals and doctrine
- This world as a 'shadowland' for Lewis, exile from humanity's true home in heaven

The Writing of *Narnia*

- › Seven books written between 1950 and 1956
- › Did not write the books in chronological order and they were not published in the order in which they were written
- › Came up with image of a faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood when he was sixteen, and eventually decided to ‘make a story about it’
- › Began writing the story after hosting children evacuated from London in his house in Oxford during the Second World War

Themes

- Death, resurrection, and the importance of sacrifice
- Faith and renewal as instinctive and innate
- Importance of humility, empathy, and community-mindedness
- The making of good rulers and leaders
- The importance of discovering and encountering the holy for oneself
- The seductiveness of evil
- Creation and destruction