

# MovieLit

## The *Classics* go to the *Movies!*

Parents/Teachers,

We invite you to use and enjoy this free sample unit from our exciting **MovieLit** curriculum, which provides not only College Prep-level composition instruction, but more specifically literary analysis skills!

Each unit in the **MovieLit** curriculum is designed to be completed in two weeks. The full-credit one-year course is made up of 18 units. Please see our course description at [www.moviekit.com/how.htm](http://www.moviekit.com/how.htm). For each unit it is necessary that you acquire, from whatever source you wish, the movie on which the unit is based. (All our movies are available inexpensively from Netflix.)

Your free unit includes all the necessary excerpts from our instructional introduction to the course (the “Dynamic Dozen Took Kit”), and all the student and teacher materials for *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

If you were to purchase the full curriculum you would receive a Student Handbook and a Teacher Handbook (with scoring guide) including all 10 of the required units, 14 more elective units from which you would select 6 of your choice, and the double-unit final project in which all that the student has learned is applied to *The Scarlet Letter*.

You would also have the option of purchasing our professional online scoring service for all 18 of your student’s final essays. You may prefer, of course, to do your own scoring of final essays, and the Teacher handbook provides you with information and pointers that many parent-teachers find very adequate for their own use.

No other curriculum offers such thorough and enjoyable instruction in the special academic skill of writing about literature while simultaneously introducing students to 17 literary classics in a single school year. **MovieLit** is a golden opportunity at a bargain price, and we trust you will enjoy this free introduction.

Sincerely,

Norm Fox, **MovieLit** author

(Excerpts from) *MovieLit*'s “Dynamic Dozen” Writing Tool Kit

**TWELVE POWERFUL TOOLS FOR EXAMINING LITERARY MOVIES**

**TOOL #1. UNCOVERING THE PLOT.**

Plot is simply the series of events that make up a story line, but not just any collection of events will do. (John Masefield wrote a novel mysteriously titled *Odtaa*, later explaining that the title simply stood for “One Da[r]ned Thing After Another.”) Successful literary plots generally have much more design than that. Experience has shown that one specific dramatic pattern tends to do the best job of holding the reader’s (or viewer’s) interest. That pattern goes something like this:

- A. Equilibrium.** Balance. Most stories start with some degree of normalcy in the characters’ lives. The author’s effort to describe that condition, introduce the characters, and explain any necessary background to the reader, is called **exposition**.
- B. Conflict.** A critical problem arises that upsets the equilibrium. It sets the rest of the plot in motion and cannot be ignored. It must be resolved somehow, and the main character or characters will either succeed or fail in their efforts to resolve it. (See **TOOL #4** for more detail on conflict.)
- C. Complications.** Circumstances drive the conflict to a higher level of intensity. A complication is sometimes called a **rising action**. There may be multiple complications that are more or less resolved, but do not bring final closure to the larger problem. They merely move the plot ahead to the next complication or to the ultimate climax and resolution.
- D. Climax.** This is the turning point that determines the final outcome. It often provides the high point of interest and suspense in the story. Its results may not be immediately obvious, but once we see the whole story we realize that the outcome was virtually determined at that moment, just as every war has a decisive battle which is not necessarily the final battle, but which served as the turning point and determined which side would eventually win.
- E. Resolution.** The way the story turns out. People who want to sound French may call this the **denouement** (day-new-mah). It settles the consequences of the climax and concludes the story with a new equilibrium, different from the equilibrium at the beginning of the story.

**TOOL #5. SIZING UP THE CHARACTERS.**

Character analysis is one of the most important parts of evaluating literature. Let’s start with some simple but important definitions.

- A. Static Character.** A character who remains the same throughout the story.
- B. Dynamic Character.** A character who changes in some important way during the story.
- C. Round Character.** A character who is developed “three-dimensionally,” with distinctive and unique characteristics.

**D. Flat Character.** A character who is given very little personality, but occupies a simplistic standard role in the story, such as the hero, villain, and innocent young heroine in a melodrama. Such characters are practically interchangeable from one story to another, and are sometimes called **stock characters** or **type characters**.

**E. Foil.** A character who is the opposite of another character in the story, and serves to focus the reader's attention by contrast on the qualities of the other character.

Answering some or all of the following questions may be helpful in writing a character description:

- What does this character look like? Is that important?
- What are this character's personal strengths and weaknesses?
- In which of the five categories above does this character belong? Why?
- Does this character grow as a person during the story? Or deteriorate?
- What do other characters think of this character? Why?
- What does this character think of other characters? Why?
- What is this character's motivation and philosophy of life?

#### **TOOL #6. PINPOINTING THE THEME.**

A theme can be thought of as the big idea, the point, or even the moral of a story. Themes are sometimes stated simply as topics, such as maturity, sacrificial love, or facing death. Themes may be stated as contrasts, such as innocence vs. maturity, free will vs. fate, or appearance vs. reality. They may also be stated as complete-sentence assertions, such as "Selfishness is self-defeating," or "We must learn to live with the imperfections of others," or "Forgiveness heals the forgiver and the forgiven." Sometimes **symbols** (physical objects representing abstract ideas) are used to help communicate themes. A tattered baseball card, for example, might symbolize the lost joy of childhood for a man, or an heirloom locket might represent family stability or loyalty.

A student of literature should feel qualified, after careful reading or viewing, not only to identify the theme, but to evaluate it. Is the author's main point, his theme, true? Is it important? Does it achieve some degree of universal human significance, so that it might interest people of other cultures or of generations to come? (See "Universality" under **TOOL #9**.) What questions does it raise? What answers does it propose? How effectively has the author supported the theme?

#### **TOOL #7. FIGURING THE PHILOSOPHY.**

Philosophy may be closely related to theme, but it is a quality all its own. Some students of literature regard an author's attitude or emotional tone as a philosophy, so they would list terms like **cynical**, **romantic**, or **optimistic** as examples of philosophy.

More properly, philosophy should be thought of as a "world view," a belief system, possibly even a religious faith. Thus, the philosophy surrounding a novel or play might be **agnostic**, **Christian**, **humanistic**, or **deistic**, to name a few possibilities. Other examples include **naturalistic** (representing man as a natural product of evolution), **existential** (asserting man's autonomy and isolation in the universe), or **providential** (emphasizing divine provision and direction in human affairs).

# *The Chronicles of Narnia*

## *(The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe)*

**Movie Quick-Facts:**

**Author:** C. S. Lewis

**Publication Date:** 1950

**Movie Release Date:** 2005

**Rating:** PG

**Studio:** Disney

**Key Names:** Roger Ford, William Moseley

**Length:** 135 minutes

**Story Summary:** Four sibling children unexpectedly gain access to a parallel fantasy world known as Narnia where they meet people, animals, and combinations thereof. They become key players along with the royal lion Aslan in an epic struggle to rid Narnia of an evil queen's domination.

**Pointers for Parents:** The PG rating results from graphically-portrayed violence, particularly in the final battle scene, and from tense situations such as the children being threatened by vicious wolves. Please note that students may choose to pay close attention to the Christian symbolic elements in the story, and will have opportunity to write about them in the essay assignments, but this level of literary analysis is optional.

### ***Introducing the movie***

The most famous of the seven books in the Chronicles of Narnia series by C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* was brought to the screen with much fanfare in 2005. Just like the book, the movie has been widely enjoyed by viewers fascinated simply by the epic fantasy atmosphere of the story line itself and by viewers looking for the rich Christian symbolism behind the story. Students studying the movie as part of this curriculum can do so from either viewpoint, and the essay questions will allow for both options as well.

American viewers may appreciate the subtitles as a source of assistance with the charming but sometimes puzzling British accents in the movie, and might also benefit from the following historic heads-up: the children are being sent out of London at the start of the story along with many other children because the Germans were bombing the city of London during World War II.

Things to watch for in the movie include the character of Edmund, the younger of the two brothers. Also, listen closely for "the prophecy." Try to get it word for word, or at least a good paraphrase. You can count on a prophecy being important. There will also be a crucial statement of Narnia's "deep magic" that comes later in the movie from the mouth of Aslan himself, which will be worth understanding. Another tip, or rather an intriguing question: What's that stuff the queen is wearing during the final battle scene?

So now, it looks like it's your turn to step into the wardrobe and see what happens...

## Assignment A

### Chronicles of Narnia Objective Test

1. \_\_\_\_ For 100 years, conditions in Narnia had been “Always \_\_\_\_ and never \_\_\_\_.”  
A. hopeless, happy B. frozen, free C. winter, Christmas D. wrong, right
2. \_\_\_\_ All four children finally find Narnia together, because they have been trying to hide from  
A. each other B. the queen C. the professor D. the professor’s housekeeper
3. \_\_\_\_ Who is Edmund’s cellmate in the dungeon? A. Mr. Beaver B. Mr. Tumnus  
C. Aslan D. no one
4. \_\_\_\_ How do the statues come back to life?  
A. Someone pours a healing liquid on them  
B. Aslan breathes on them  
C. The White Witch is forced to unsay the curse  
D. It happens automatically when spring returns
5. \_\_\_\_ Mr. Tumnus says that Aslan is “not a \_\_\_\_\_ lion.” A. tame B. real  
C. weak D. dangerous
6. What are the titles by which many Narnians, good and bad, address the four children?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Match the children’s names with the gifts they receive from Father Christmas. (One or more of the children may have received more than one gift.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Peter A. Bow and arrows  
\_\_\_\_\_ Susan B. Healing juice  
\_\_\_\_\_ Edmund C. Sword & shield  
\_\_\_\_\_ Lucy D. Dagger  
E. Horn to blow for help
8. Match the children’s names with the titles they are given at their coronation.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Peter A. the Just  
\_\_\_\_\_ Susan B. the Magnificent  
\_\_\_\_\_ Edmund C. the Gentle  
\_\_\_\_\_ Lucy D. the Valiant

**Objective Test Score Key:**

1, C. 2, D. 3, B. 4, B. 5, A. 6. Sons of Adam & Daughters of Eve. 7. Peter: C. Susan: A+E. Edmund: (none). Lucy: B+D. 8. Peter: B. Susan: C. Edmund: A. Lucy: D.

**Assignment B**

Review **TOOL #5** in your Dynamic Dozen Tool Kit before starting this essay assignment. Then write a good answer to the essay question, noticing how many different things you are being directed to do, and being careful to write good, complete sentences. Your essay should be no less than 300 words in length.

*In Narnia, we find good and bad animal characters. Identify examples of each, explain why you see them as good or bad, and comment on how well-chosen each particular animal is when it comes to portraying their character qualities.*

In grading this essay, the following animals could be described with accompanying details to fulfill the requirements of the question:

- Mr. Tumnus might qualify as an animal, being a mythical “faun,” half-man and half-goat. One of the good creatures of Narnia, he bravely tries to oppose the White Witch (Jadis). His pleasant mythological aura makes him well-suited to be a sympathetic character.
- Mr. and Mrs. Beaver are good animals, also part of the brave opposition to the Witch. Beavers are seen as industrious, creative creatures, basically harmless and even a bit humorous-looking, so they make good sympathetic characters.
- The fox is another good animal, somewhat on the sly and clever side as foxes are generally portrayed, but commendably brave and self-sacrificing in protecting the children and the beavers. He also shows courage in addressing Edmund as “your majesty” in the presence of the White Witch. He ironically refers to the “unfortunate family resemblance” between himself and the wolves.
- The mice have a very brief role, but they are seen gnawing through Aslan’s restraints and thus contributing to his resurrection. Mice are generally irritating, and yet they often appear as cute and attractive characters in children’s stories and cartoons.
- Several leopards appear in Aslan’s army. Leopards are related to lions, and even in the etymology of their name. The movie places no focus on them other than showing them several times.
- Aslan himself, of course, is a good animal, and the author’s choice of this animal is based partly in its regal reputation as king of the beasts.
- On the dark side, the wolves are the most obvious example, and particularly the lead wolf Maugrin, “captain of the secret police”. These creatures are the violent and lethal “enforcers” for the White Witch, and the wolf species is one that we traditionally dread as a strong and treacherous predator.
- Among the army of real and mythological beasts that serve the Witch in the final battle, the polar bears are perhaps the most identifiable, as they pull her chariot. Bears are frightening, but we tend to think more benevolently of polar bears, probably due to the striking beauty of their white coats. Yet their whiteness is the very reason they are appropriate as minions of the White Witch.

## *Assignment C*

**Paragraph answers.** Choose two of these three questions and answer them in a good paragraph each. Pay close attention to spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure as well as supporting your answers with specific information from the movie. These questions can generally be answered in paragraphs of 75 to 100 words.

- **1.** Describe the professor, focusing especially on his reactions in the two scenes where children report to him about having been to Narnia.

The professor seems to be the classic eccentric professor, very friendly to the children in contrast to the attitude of his housekeeper. Early in the movie when the older children tell him of their worries about Lucy's apparent "tall tale," he defends Lucy and says they should not assume she's not telling the truth. At the end, he is unsurprised by the children's veiled report of their entire adventure in Narnia. When they say "You wouldn't believe it," he replies "Try me." When asked, "Will we ever go back," he says they well might, but only "when you're not looking for it." Don't we suspect he's been there and back?

- **2.** Describe the scene in which the children, grown to adulthood, inadvertently find their way back to the "real world." Include a short account of what kind of adults they seem to be, and how the physical return from Narnia comes about.

We see the four, apparently years after their initial adventure, grown into handsome young adults and riding horses magnificently in Narnia. They are indeed kings and queens. They happen to come to the lamppost, overgrown with the years, and have a vague recollection of it "as if from a dream of a dream." Exploring beyond it, they come to think trees, which turn into the coats of the wardrobe, and all tumble out onto the floor of the professor's house, children once again.

- **3.** Summarize in one paragraph the lesson or message of this story as you see it, using specific information from the story to support your summary.

This will be a subjective response, difficult to place expectations on in advance. It is important that the student's statement be clear, and well-supported with information from the story.

## *Assignment D*

Choose one of the two essay questions below and respond to it in a well-organized essay of 300 words or more.

- **1.** Point out several of the most important symbols in the movie, identifying in each case the physical object, what it seems to represent, and how appropriate or effective it is in achieving the author's purpose.

Some possible examples:

\* The "Turkish Delight" that Edmund so loves seems to represent human desires or temptations. An effective symbol because we understand it would be delicious and attractive, but we know it is not worth the risks Edmund takes to get it, and we see that it was not as real as it looked, having been created by magic.

\* The ice in Narnia seems to represent the paralyzing power of evil. Hard, cold and inflexible, it is even unnatural, because it has persisted for 100 years rather than coming and going in normal seasonal cycles. The White Witch's castle, symbolically, is made of ice, so there is no warm indoor escape from the cold over which she rules. (Warmth, especially represented in Aslan's restorative breath, is the symbol of life standing in contrast to all this icy coldness.)

\* The statues may be symbols of death, as formerly living beings have been turned to cold stone.

\* Aslan's mane takes on symbolic significance as the Witch insists that it be shorn prior to his death, and then she appears to be wearing it when she leads her forces into the ensuing battle. It seems to symbolize majesty and authority, and functions quite powerfully as it belongs naturally to Aslan but appears unnatural and usurped on the Witch.

- 2. Viewers and readers who believe that this story is full of specifically biblical symbolism find a number of parallels between the story and the Bible. Describe several of the most important parallels that could fit this category, and explain how you think these symbols contribute to conveying the theme of the story.

Whatever specifics the student cites as parallels, it is important that he or she also address the last part of the question, which will require identifying the theme of the story. Review **TOOL #6** in the Tool Kit to prepare for evaluating that part of the response. Here is a list of possible biblical parallels in the story:

\* Edmund's failure to resist the "Turkish Delight" temptation is much like the account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

\* The idea of the White Witch having usurped power over Narnia could be seen as equivalent to Satan's usurped rule over the earth, and the hope that "Aslan is on the move" equivalent to the expectation of a Messiah to set things right.

\* The Stone Table seems to represent at first the demands of the law, and then the cross, or its location at Golgotha (Calvary).

\* Aslan represents Christ in this analysis.

\* The White Witch's claim on Edmund's life is similar to Satan's claim on the sinful human race, relying on God's own law that "the wages of sin is death."

\* Aslan's reference to a "Deep Magic that rules over Narnia" and his statement that "I was there when it was written" may seem to parallel God's sovereignty over the universe, based on his role as creator of its basic physical and moral laws.

\* Aslan's lonely night before his sacrifice, and his acceptance of the girls' offer to pass the time with him ("I would be glad of the company for a while.") is reminiscent of Christ in Gethsemane and his apostles.

\* The splitting of the stone table coincident with Aslan's resurrection has been variously interpreted as paralleling the splitting of the temple veil at Christ's death or the rolling away of the stone over the tomb.

\* The entire Christian doctrine of atonement and resurrection are reflected in Aslan's explanation of the true meaning of the deep magic, "When a willing victim who has committed no treachery is killed in a traitor's stead, the stone table will crack and even death itself will turn backwards."

\* Aslan's breathing on the statues to bring them back to life (breath being virtually interchangeable with spirit in the Bible) may well symbolize the resurrection of Christ's followers, and is also reminiscent of God's breathing life into Adam in the creation account.

## ***The Chronicles of Narnia* Final Essay Test**

Instructions: After you have completed all the preliminary work for the film, take the essay test below. Once you have seen this essay question, you should write the entire essay in one uninterrupted sitting without reviewing your notes or any of the instructional materials in your **MovieLit** Student Book. Your essay should be approximately 500 words in length.

*Give a thorough description of Edmund as a character in the story, and an analysis of how he impacts the plot. What do we see in his character even before his first encounter with the White Witch? What is it in his character that she seeks to exploit? What moral can we draw from the outcome for Edmund?*

### **Pointers for Parent-Teachers who are doing their own grading of the *Final Essay Test*.**

A description of Edmund's character could include points such as these:

- He appears sullen and even hard to please from the beginning. (Students should give one or more examples to support this generalization.)
- He seems to resent being told what to do by his older siblings.
- He lies at Lucy's expense, not confessing at first that he has been (briefly) to Narnia and knows she has been telling the truth.

The White Witch seems to exploit these character flaws in Edmund:

- His vanity, offering him a high position at her side in the kingdom so that he can have authority over his siblings.
- This vanity could be seen as related to his resentment of his brother and sisters.
- His appetite for "Turkish Delight" candy, giving him a taste of it and promising him more if he will co-operate further with her.

Edmund impacts the plot in the following ways:

- His complicity with the White Witch draws his siblings further into the story, and into danger, because they feel obligated to seek and save him after he disappears from them to meet the witch. If he had not done this, they would probably have left Narnia without incident, and we wouldn't have a story.
- The information he gives the white witch results in the endangerment, imprisonment, and even petrification of other characters, notably Mr. Tumnus.
- The rightful demand that the White Witch makes upon Edmund's life forces the story to its climax in which Aslan, fulfilling a "deeper magic" than she knows of, makes the sacrifice of his own life to save the boy.

The outcome for Edmund is that his life is saved. He becomes a hero in the battle to overcome the White Witch and is then crowned a king of Narnia on an equal footing with his siblings.

Lessons from this outcome might include:

- Even people who deserve much blame for their failures are not necessarily irredeemable.
- Such people may be worth redeeming even at considerable cost to the one or ones who must sacrifice for that to happen.
- There may be good in the worst of us if others will take it upon themselves to seek it out.