



The Essential C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis , Lyle Wesley Dorsett (Editor)

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In this wide-ranging and authoritative collection of C.S. Lewis's writings, Lyle W. Dorsett brings together the many and varied facets of the beloved author's corpus. Selecting works of fiction, science fiction, autobiography, theology, poetry, and literary criticism, as well as Lewis's letters to adults and children, Dorsett shows the erudite author at his most innovative, challenging, witty, and sympathetic.

Among the pieces included are Lewis's famous sermons, selections from *The Screwtape Letters* and *Letters to Children*, and the complete texts of three of Lewis's books: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the first of *The Chronicles of Narnia*; *Perelandra*, the critically acclaimed second installment of Lewis's Space Trilogy; and *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis's brief treatise on philosophy and education.

The Essential C.S. Lewis Details

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From Reader Review The Essential C.S. Lewis for online ebook

Kim says

Ok, so I didn't really finish it...I keep coming back to it and reading sections. I cannot make myself read the sci-fi "Perelandra" even though I keep meaning to do it. The letters, poetry, essays are thought-provoking and fill in some the spaces in understanding Lewis' personal life. I totally recommend it, especially if you haven't read much/any of his work.

MisterFweem says

I enjoyed reading this collection -- going from re-reading The Chronicles of Narnia and Perelandra to getting into some of Lewis' other works.

I'd forgotten how talky Perelandra is. That Hideous Strength is definitely the best of his space trilogy.

And I'm again amazed at the economy of The Chronicles of Narnia. A delightful and powerful book of just under 40,000 words. That's something to aspire to.

Dorsett's selection of works for this collection is wide-ranging, and I think adequate. I would have liked to have seen Lewis' "Learning in War-Time" included, but other than that, I'm not sure there was anything missing from this well-rounded collection.

Nohreen says

Excellent book by a literary genius such as C.S. Lewis. Included in this book are his works from differing genres. The volume includes essays, novels, autobiography, poetry, letters & writings on literature-- are truly enjoyable and rich book. I had to read it slower and at a leisurely pace so as to fully grasp the depth of some of what's included, especially the Perelandra. A must read and re-read book.

Tracy Houk-ishitoya says

This is a nice sampler of Lewis's greatest hits.

Suzannah says

Terrific collections of some of his best writing.

Monica Aho says

C.S. Lewis has got to be one of the greatest minds of the 20th Century. This book gives a flavor of some of his greatest - from apologetics to philosophy, juvenile and adult fiction, as well as autobiographical essays. When he admits that he is "speaking to the vulgar masses" (read 'speaking in simple, layman's terms'), I understand him completely. When he is in his scholarly mode, I admit that I have to think VERY HARD to understand what he's trying to say (e.g. "The Abolition of Man")... but when I DO discern it, I find myself saying "Oh, yeah. Of COURSE!" Definitely a book that makes you want to move beyond the excerpts and read the FULL C.S. Lewis collection more thoroughly.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

This was the parting gift of a friend and coworker. We had sparred constantly: he the devout Catholic, me the "stone cold atheist." I shook my head when I saw the title. "You don't give up, do you?" He replied in a Darth Vader voice, "Ah, but if you could be turned!" I took it as a compliment and didn't have the heart to tell him I had already encountered C.S. Lewis, the famous Christian apologist, and found his arguments unconvincing and his philosophy uncongenial.

A lot of the selections in this anthology I'd read before. I had read the *Narnia* books, the *Space Trilogy*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *Mere Christianity* and as much of *Abolition of Man* as I could stomach. I was reminded again of why I keep reading Lewis though when I turned to the first selection included, an excerpt from his spiritual biography *Surprised by Joy*. I soon found myself smiling. At his best there's something very beguiling about C.S. Lewis: you feel as if he's directly addressing you. A trusted friend, one who respects your intelligence, even your good intentions. And if I do consider a lot of his arguments straw men, better straw men than smoke. His arguments are logical and lucid. He has the gift for making very sophisticated ideas plain and comprehensible. His worst? Well, I had found the *Space Trilogy* unbearably sexist, anti-republican and it, and *Abolition of Man*, exasperated me with its anti-science, anti-reason, anti-exploration and anti-technology rhetoric. I encountered this line in this book from *Reflections on the Psalms*: "Later we learn (which God forbid) to travel in space and distribute upon new worlds the vomit of our own corruption." That line embodies a lot of what I find most repugnant in Lewis. The idea of man as this cringing, unworthy thing and the achievement, the wonder I love in space exploration is denigrated as vile, the entire idea of improving life, society on this earth as unworthy.

Beyond my objections to the material, I did find some choices of the editor dubious. Dorsett admits Lewis thought *Till We Have Faces* his best work. And I'd agree. I assumed it wasn't included for reasons of length, then I found this comment by Dorsett introducing the (complete!) text of Lewis' novel *Perelandra*. "Because this later novel [*Till We Have Faces*], a retelling of the myth of Psyche and Cupid is often difficult for the beginning reader to understand the unabridged *Perelandra* is reprinted here." Huh???? *Till We Have Faces* is my favorite Lewis work--it was also my first. I didn't find it difficult; I also didn't find it heavy handed in the way I'd later find some of *Narnia* and pretty much all of the *Space Trilogy* (of which *Perelandra* is the middle work. If you're going to include the complete text of one of them, why not *Out of the Silent Planet*, the first book of the three?) Due for a reread, but not only do I remember *Till We Have Faces* as lovely and moving, but it featured a female protagonist who is absolutely convincing (which is more than could be said for *Perelandra*.) Lewis' relationship late in life with his wife Joy Davidson might have helped a lot--Lewis himself gave her a lot of credit. And for that matter I regret the entire omission of *A Grief Observed* dealing with his reactions to her death, which is Lewis at his most moving and universal. I don't know that I'd recommend *The Essential C. S. Lewis* as an introduction to Lewis (one reason I'm not rating this highly)--although I was happy to sample works from him I hadn't encountered before, especially his literary criticism.

Jen3n says

I'd previously read everything in this collection, but throughly enjoyed re-reading what was essentially a highlight-reel of an excellent author.

Ryan Linkous says

This is a great collection and introduction of some of C.S. Lewis's most important works. It has been a blessing to learn from and enjoy Lewis's brilliance. Not only was he a great Christian essayist and novelist, but he also made significant contributions to literary criticism and gave many people counsel by answered every piece of fan mail he ever received. I think that his most important essays/sermons are "The Weight of Glory," "De Descriptione Temporum," and "God in the Dock.

What was surprising was how accessible and enjoyable Lewis's writings in literary criticism are. His essay on Edmund Spenser, author of "Faerie Queen," made me want to pick up a copy and start reading.

This book is a great place to start if one wants an introduction to Lewis. It should whet the reader's appetite for a certain genre of Lewis's writings, which one could then delve into further.

Emily says

Fantastic collection of a variety of Lewis' forms of writing.

Randa says

Just read 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' from this compilation. LOVED it.

Kristen says

I love this survey of Lewis' work...you get a taste of every genre he wrote in. It was especially enjoyable to re-read "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe." Ah, Aslan!

The only 2 sections I haven't LOVED have been the Adult Fiction, which includes the sci-fi novel "Perelandra" and the Philosophy. A little TOO deep. I am so excited to read the whole books of which I've now read excerpts, thanks to this book!

Jennifer Tse says

This is a good collection of C.S. Lewis' works. I got this as a gift. Personally, I probably wouldn't have bought it unless if you really like most of C.S. Lewis' writing. I only liked Chronicles of Narnia, Surprised by Joy, the selection from The Screwtape Letters, selection from Mere Christianity, and his letters. It only

includes the complete texts of Perelandra, The Abolition of Man, and The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. I would have wanted the complete text of Mere Christianity instead. I read the whole book because I wanted to gain some insights and knowledge about Christianity from him, since he is a strong Christian. However, I couldn't become interest in most of his other works and it kind of felt a little bit like drudgery reading through Perelandra and The Abolition of Man. Maybe it's because I'm not interested in science fiction or just don't understand his philosophical writings at much. However, it's still a good book to add to my bookcase!

Todd says

Good book overall. I had read parts of this book previously. Also a little dry in sections, specifically Literary History, Theories, and Criticism. As a result I skipped some sections...so technically I didn't read every piece of this book. Notwithstanding, I would recommend this book to others.

Becky Fields says

It's not that you read this from front to back -- it's that it's a helpful compilation of some of Lewis' finest. Should sit on your shelf. But it's far better if you take it down occasionally to peruse its pages. And discover, again, Lewisian insight.
