

Advanced Placement Literature and Composition
Summer Assignment

This assignment is due on the first day of school. Submission is required in order to remain in the course.

TEXTS

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis

Suggested: book of choice

See list of titles used on past AP Exams

[AP Novel Titles](#)

I. Assignment One- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Complete a dialectical journal of ten entries. Entries need to cover the breadth of the book. Consider: themes, the author's literary choices, literary devices, characterization, point of view, etc. See example attached below.

*Please be prepared for a reading assessment upon your return to school.

II. Two- Read *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. Complete tasks A and B.

- A. Please read, "The Screwtape Letters Background Information" and "What Are The Screwtape Letters? - Format & Style" below for context.
- B. Complete a dialectical journal that covers the breadth of the book. You should have a minimum of ten entries. Consider: themes, the author's literary choices, literary devices, characterization, point of view, structure, etc.

Dialectical Journal EXAMPLE from *Fahrenheit 451*. You will follow this model for each of your quotations.

Quote	Your Analysis

<p>"It was a pleasure to burn ... his hands were like the hands of some amazing conductor playing all of the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history" (3).</p>	<p>We meet Guy Montag for the first time participating in what he seems to find a joyous act of destruction. The fire imagery is rampant: "blackened and changed," "blazing and burning," "tatters and charcoal." Perhaps fire will become a motif in this novel. The metaphor of a fire hose as a "great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world" provides the reader with the idea that the act of burning is deadly, perhaps even evil as snakes are often associated with Satan and the Garden of Eden. Additionally, the connotation of the word venomous instead of poisonous seems to imply the intention to do ill, as venomous animals use their venom to kill and poisonous plants do not seek out death. The next metaphor of Montag's hands as those of a conductor "playing all of the symphonies" conveys the odd idea that there is some kind of harmony in this act of destruction. It seems that Montag loved this destructive action, but the author's use of figurative language provides the reader with the idea that this is harmful.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Example is adapted from Brentwood Christian</i></p>
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Dialectical Journal Template: [AP Lit Dialectical Journal Template](#)

Dialectical Journal Rubric: [Dialectical Journal Rubric](#)

A Word on Academic Integrity

This is an individual assignment. The assignment you submit must be entirely your own. You will submit your assignment to turnitin.com on the first day of school.

The Screwtape Letters Background Information

Synopsis

Screwtape, an undersecretary in the Lowerarchy of Hell, has undertaken the guidance and tutelage of his nephew Wormwood, who has been assigned a human patient to secure for eternity. In a series of letters, Screwtape guides the young demon through the finer points of temptation, the weaknesses and foibles of human beings, and the disaster of his patient becoming a Christian. Though this certainly complicates things, the two infernal beings won't let it stop them.

From this very skewed perspective, C. S. Lewis digs into human nature, revealing some interesting, and sometimes embarrassing, tendencies. Touching on everything from sleeplessness to the "absurdity" of God's love for humanity, Screwtape imparts his wicked wisdom to Wormwood. Though the mirror he holds up to humanity is warped and cracked, it is still painfully revealing. Wit and parody mask a very serious analysis of what makes humans tick; and though it may make readers smile, it will also make us squirm as Screwtape picks at the cracks in our façades.

About the Novel's Author

Throughout his life, Clive Staples Lewis (1898–1963) had a passion for stories. He loved to read them, and when he was not reading them, he was likely to be writing them. Late in life, he encouraged one young correspondent, “[W]hy don’t you try to write [a story] yourself? I was writing stories before I was your age, and if you try, I’m sure you would find it great fun.”¹ Biographer A. N. Wilson states that Lewis’s “happiest times were spent either reading or writing or talking about reading and writing. . . .”²

To be sure, Lewis’s wrote in genres other than narrative. He produced many academic volumes. He gained celebrity as the author of such popular books of Christian theology as *Mere Christianity* (1952) and *Miracles* (1947). But his stories have captivated the hearts and minds of innumerable readers. His science fiction trilogy—*Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945)—reminds one critic “of a Christian H. G. Wells, mingling rocket ships and faraway planets with the doctrines of the fall of man and the second coming.”³ The *Chronicles of Narnia* (seven volumes, 1950–1956) is arguably Lewis’s most well known and enduring work. The Narnia books not only tell rousing adventure tales but also explore basic tenets of Christian faith in a fantasy context.

C. S. Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland, on November 29, 1898, to Albert and Florence Hamilton Lewis. “Jack,” as he was known his whole life, was the couple’s second child; their firstborn, Warren Hamilton—“Warnie,” as his brother would call him—had arrived three years earlier. Albert Lewis was a lawyer whose prosperity allowed him to build a home for his family in the country called Little Lea. In Little Lea’s nursery, Warnie and Jack imagined stories of fantastic lands where animals talked.

But the happiness at Little Lea ended in 1908. Albert’s father died in April; his oldest brother died in September. Between these two deaths, in August, Flora died of cancer. Jack joined Warnie at a boarding school, a place Jack hated so much that, years later in his autobiography, he called it a “concentration camp.”⁴ The only good he would recall from his time there was his first real exposure to Christianity. By 1911, however, Lewis had abandoned the faith.

He would not embrace it again until after he became a professor at Oxford University, and then only reluctantly. He converted first in 1929 to theism (a belief in a supreme being), and later, in 1931, to Christianity—encouraged by his friendship with fellow Oxford professor J. R. R. Tolkien, author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

With Lewis’s conversion to Christianity came his many published books, only some of which are noted above. Ironically, the popularity Lewis achieved through his books would take his position at Oxford away from him. As A. N. Wilson explains:

It was not [Lewis’s] failure to be a good graduate supervisor which cost him an Oxford chair, it was *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters*: the fact that he wrote them, and the far more damaging fact that millions of people, as they do to this day, wanted to read them.⁵

Upon leaving Oxford in 1954, Lewis accepted the position of Chair of English at Magdalene College in Cambridge University.

In 1956, Lewis married American poet Joy Davidman. (Their correspondence, meeting, and marriage are the subject of the BBC television production and American motion picture *Shadowlands* by William Nicholson). Joy’s death from cancer prompted the writing of Lewis’s most personal book, *A Grief Observed* (1961). Lewis himself died of a weak heart on November 22, 1963.

The Screwtape Letters (serialized in an Anglican Church magazine in 1941 and published in book form in 1942) is a remarkable hybrid of Lewis's passion for story-telling and his eagerness to teach and defend the Christian faith. The plot of the book—one man's journey of faith, from beginning to end—seems simple enough from a human point of view. Lewis, however, tells the tale not from a human point of view but from a demonic one, thus alerting readers that much more is at stake than they might think. In *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis weaves together the threads of straightforward narrative and nuanced theology into a rich and unforgettable whole.

Notes

- 1 C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Children*, eds. Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie Lamp Mead (New York: Macmillan, 1985) 101–102.
- 2 A. N. Wilson, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990) 11–12.
- 3 Mark Edwards Freshwater, *C. S. Lewis and the Truth of Myth* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988) 1.
- 4 C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harvest-Harcourt Brace & Co., 1955) 22.
- 5 Wilson 146.

Reference:

Poteet, Michael S. *The Screwtape Letters: Study Guide*. Progeny Press, 2001.

What Are The Screwtape Letters? - Format & Style

What is Epistolary Literature?

Imagine you just got a new job - maybe as a door-to-door salesman - and your boss lives halfway across the country. Instead of managing you in person, he sends a weekly email to check up on your progress, set goals and give ideas for new sales pitches you should focus on. He might even spur you to reach higher goals by giving advice and cheering you on.

Now let's say this boss has a naturally interesting and humorous writing style. You've caught yourself going for a drink after work and sharing the emails with a buddy so that you can both have a good laugh over the boss's words. In fact, those emails eventually become so much fun to read that you decide to create a small book out of them. Congratulations, you've just created epistolary literature!

Epistolary literature is basically a book or story created out of letters. No, not the alphabetical kind, but the 'Dear Sal' type! However, the slight difference between a letter and an **epistle** is that an epistle is generally written for a larger audience to get a message across; a letter is usually just for a personal or individual audience.

In our above example, you created epistolary **non-fiction** (think not fake or true). It wasn't meant for a larger audience to begin with, but you found humor in it and wanted to share the message with a larger audience, and so then, made it epistolary.

In C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, we still see the epistolary nature of the work, but it is in a **fictional** environment (think fake or make believe). In this novel, the reader learns that the mentoring demon Screwtape is writing letters to his mentee, the demon Wormwood. Just as your boss, in our example, wrote to you each week and spurred you onward, Screwtape writes to Wormwood and tries to spur him onward in his job of corrupting humankind. He's a different kind of door-to-door salesman, basically.

You may be asking yourself - *how it can be an epistle if it was written from one demon to the next and wasn't meant for a larger audience?* Because the story is fictional, Lewis intended for you, the reader, to be the audience. He also intended for there to be plenty of readers (as most authors would hope!) and so that makes these letters epistolary vs. just regular letters.

Why Write in an Epistolary Style?

There may be several reasons that C.S. Lewis chose the epistolary style for *The Screwtape Letters*. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, is that it mimics some parts of the Bible. This is important, because *The Screwtape Letters* is a novel that aspires to refute the devil and defend Christianity through satire.

Satire is the use of irony to expose an opposing view's flaws. In this case, by narrating from the demon perspective, the reader sees the flaws in the narrator and his mentee and comes to a better understanding of Christianity and God's unconditional love in the end.

In the Bible, epistles are used to get the message and the story of the Lord across. Paul is famous for writing epistles in the Bible. Colossians is an epistle he writes to 'God's holy people in Colassae.' Thessalonians and Galatians are other examples of this same type of epistle.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape's letters to Wormwood mimic this epic tone of a spiritual world larger than what can be seen and include plenty of moments of advice about the state of humans and what can be done to keep them from faith. For example, Screwtape writes that 'Above all, do not attempt to use science (I mean, the real sciences) as a defense against Christianity,' because it will encourage the human to think in a creative fashion, which could lead to them thinking about ethereal things such as God and his love. In the Bible, Paul offers advice as 'you who are spiritual should restore (a sinner) in spirit of gentleness' and be careful not to be tempted by the devil. By building on this contrast, C.S. Lewis creates a budding satirical environment with which to grow his purpose.

Another reason that C.S. Lewis may have chosen the epistolary style is that by having the structure of written letters he can focus on his message more than on the environment of the novel. He can really spend time delving into the narrator's voice so that the reader can understand the satire in it and can understand that the true message is one of God's love and faith ringing true.

The reader gathers the message through the satire of Screwtape as he mentors Wormwood, to whom he says 'our cause is never more in jeopardy than when a human, no longer desiring but still intending to do our Enemy's will, looks round upon a universe in which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.' The Enemy here in Screwtape's mind is God, and he is clearly frustrated with the idea of faith and believers who believe and obey even without evidence. By using the epistolary framework, Lewis can spend his time developing these ideas vs. the universe around a story.

Lesson Summary

Epistles are letters written to a large audience to get a message across. **Epistolary literature** is a novel or book comprised of letters. C.S. Lewis chooses to use epistolary framework for his novel *The Screwtape Letters* because it benefits his desire to get a message about Christianity across in a brief and clear way with a satirical narrative.

Reference:

What Are The Screwtape Letters?,
study.com/academy/lesson/what-are-the-screwtape-letters-format-style.html. Accessed 29 May 2023.