

Narnian Virtues

Teacher Handbook

The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis



A Character Education English Curriculum based on the novels of C.S. Lewis

Cortland SUNY

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Professor Mark Pike (Principal Investigator), Dr Peter Hart, Dr Shirley-Anne Paul, and Kate James (University of Leeds, UK)

Professor Thomas Lickona (Co-Investigator) and Marthe Seales (State University of New York at Cortland, USA)

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Curriculum Objectives

The *Narnian Virtues: A Character Education English Curriculum* has five main objectives. Students will learn to:

1. **understand** the virtues and vices and acquire a 'virtues vocabulary' for naming, defining, and discussing those qualities, and describe the ways in which different authors use language to depict such qualities in different literary genres.
2. **identify** the virtues and vices exhibited by the characters in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, and how the author has used language to illustrate them.
3. **empathise** with the story characters—to be able to understand and describe and evaluate their thoughts, feelings, and moral decision-making as they display virtues and vices.
4. **value** the virtues and appreciate the positive consequences of virtues for self and others, realise the negative consequences of vices, and grow in motivation to improve one's efforts to exhibit the virtues and curb bad habits.
5. **apply** the virtues and plan how to develop them, overcome their character flaws, and hold themselves accountable for doing so through self-reflection and communicating their plans and progress to others.

Character education is the deliberate attempt to cultivate virtue.

The six 'Narnian' virtues, those exhibited by one or another person in the three Narnia novels that make up the curriculum, are: wisdom, love, integrity, self-control, fortitude and justice.

We define 'virtues' as good moral habits; good character consists of these good habits. If a person is 'of good character', then he or she will have developed a range of virtues (good habits).

Why Character Education?

There is much talk in education about children and young people 'fulfilling their potential', but this is possible only if they have developed a range of virtues that make up good character. A virtue is not a mere capacity, but a disposition—a settled habit of acting in a good way. That habit can vary in strength; however, we would not ordinarily be regarded as possessing a particular virtue unless we exhibit that quality most of the time. A virtue is a reasonably consistent behaviour pattern that is a distinguishing 'mark' of our character. People know us to be that sort of a person in most circumstances ('Karen is hardworking', 'Ahmad is honest', 'Sue is kind').

Character education enables us to be the best we can be in every area of our lives. As the title of Professor Thomas Lickona's book *Character Matters* (2004) suggests, working on our character is important. It's the right thing to do.

Research shows that high-quality character education has many benefits, including fostering the good work habits that support academic attainment. (See, for example, Berkowitz and Bier's monograph, 'What Works in Character Education', www.characterandcitizenship.org, and Benninga et al., 2003).

Developing good character also enables us to perform better than we otherwise would on a great variety of tasks in life and at school.

As teachers who are character educators, we must focus on *doing*, not just *understanding*, if we are to help young people become the best they can be. We would not regard a character education curriculum to have taught kindness successfully if, at the curriculum's end, students were able to define and explain kindness but treated each other cruelly and were not motivated to treat each other kindly.

Good character enables a student to attain a personal best academically as well as in other areas of life.

Character education has been demonstrated to be associated with academic motivation and aspirations, academic achievement, prosocial behaviour, bonding to school, prosocial and democratic values, conflict-resolution skills, moral-reasoning maturity, responsibility, respect, self-efficacy, self-control, self-esteem, social skills, and trust in and respect for teachers.

(Berkowitz and Bier, 2004, p. 75)

Why Character Education Through English Literature?

Schools teach (and students learn) good character in all sorts of ways: through their approach to behaviour, the academic curriculum, the human interactions that occur throughout the school day and their home lives. But within the curriculum, one of the best places to teach character is literature classes. Equally, to do well in English, students need to evaluate characters' actions and motivations as well as evaluating the consequences of actions. Virtue literacy and ethical evaluation are essential aspects of English.

C. S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, was Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University after many years of teaching English at Oxford University. He explained:

In reading great literature I become a thousand men [people] and yet remain myself (Lewis, 1961).

Reading literature also helps us 'read' people well in life. Through literature, we can learn about what it means to be human.

In *An Experiment in Criticism*, Professor Lewis reflected that

Every act of justice or charity involves putting ourselves in the other person's place (Lewis, 1961).

Through literature, we learn about the motives for action and that the ultimate measure of our character is not just what we do, but why we do it:

Right actions done for the wrong reasons do not help to build the internal quality of character called a 'virtue', and it is this quality of character that really matters (Lewis, 1952).

In the 'secondary world' of the imagination, significant moral and character education occurs (see Pike's *Ethical English*, 2015). Learning about vice and character flaws helps students to understand Shakespearean tragedy and other works of literature. Using terms such as fortitude, for instance, and understanding why this is not quite the same as courage, enables students to evaluate characters in a range of literary works.

Learning about, evaluating and describing character is one of the main tasks of the English Literature student.

Why Character Education Through Narnia?

The bestselling Narnia novels for young readers have sold over 100 million copies in 47 languages, and recent blockbuster movies of several of the novels have been very popular. In 2015, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was included in *Time* magazine's 100 best young adults' book list, as polled by the National Centre for Illustrated Literature, the Young Readers Center at the Library of Congress, and Every Child a Reader Foundation.

Some character education curricula focus on adults who have demonstrated good character; many of them are even world famous leaders. One of the merits of the Narnian Virtues Curriculum is that the focus is not on adults of exceptional character, but on young people themselves who are developing good character. The young people who are reading the novels are reading about other young people who rise to challenges and difficulties and develop a range of virtues. We see Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy developing good character and we witness their failures as well as their successes. The Pevensies also get older from one year to the next. In fact, *Prince Caspian* takes place one year after they returned from Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

The activities in *Narnian Virtues: A Character Education English Curriculum*, have been designed to enable parents/guardians, children and teachers to focus on six virtues—love, wisdom, justice, integrity, fortitude, and self-control—that are central to good character.

*In the UK, when the Book Trust presented the best 100 books for children up to 14 years of age (split into four age categories), *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was selected as one of the best books for 11-year-olds.*

The land of Narnia is a world which young readers can still enter. In that world, the Pevensie children develop a range of virtues needed for good character. The Narnia novels depict virtuous actions that are admirable and have beneficial consequences, but also actions that are not virtuous and, in one way or another, have negative consequences.

In our research on the Narnian Virtues Curriculum (Pike, Lickona and Nesfield, 2016), we have found that the Narnia novels have the capacity to motivate a wide range of readers to make efforts to develop *the will* as well as *the skill* needed for good character.

The Narnia books depict virtues for everyone (Miller, 2008). The moral universe of Narnia is consistent with the educational and ethical philosophy that Lewis (1978/1943) sets out in *The Abolition of Man*. For more on this philosophy, see Chapter 1, 'Character Education: Learning for Life' in Mark Pike's *Mere Education: C.S. Lewis as Teacher for our Time*: available as a free download at <http://www.lutterworth.com/pub/mere%20education%20ch1.pdf>.

Six 'Narnian' Virtues

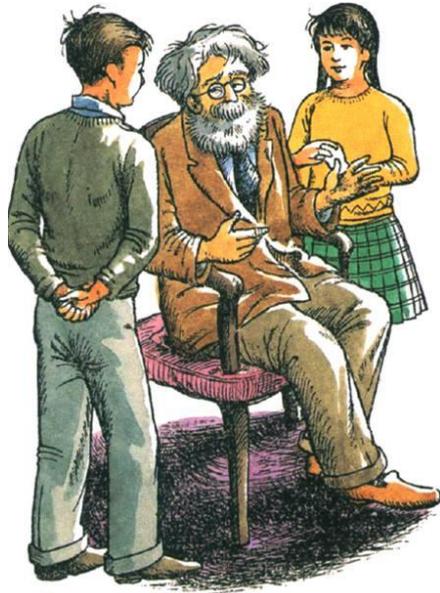
WISDOM

The habit of exercising good judgement; being able to see what is true and good and choosing the best course of action.

Wisdom includes CURIOSITY: the habit of being inquisitive; showing the desire to learn or know something. In general, it is wise to want to learn, but wisdom cautions us not to explore what may be bad for us (such as illegal drugs and the occult or 'bad pictures' such as pornography in magazines or on Internet videos that our parents or teachers would not approve of).

Without wisdom, we cannot make good decisions.

Curiosity is the mark of an active mind, but curiosity about the wrong things can get us in trouble.



Susan and Peter turned to the Professor for some wise advice

LOVE

The habit of acting selflessly for the good of another, without seeking recognition or reward; willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others by putting their well-being ahead of our own; doing good for others by being kind, caring, generous, and loyal.

Love includes FORGIVENESS, the habit of letting go of anger or resentment toward others who have caused us injury.

Love includes GRATITUDE, the habit of feeling and expressing thanks for benefits received.

There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for another.

Many people find forgiveness difficult when someone has hurt them deeply.

Gratitude is love expressed. Gratitude leads us to count our blessings.

INTEGRITY

The habit of being true to ourselves and truthful with others; standing up for moral principles and following our conscience; not engaging in self-deception, such as telling ourselves that it's OK to do something that, deep down, we know is wrong.

Integrity includes HUMILITY, the habit of being aware of our strengths and shortcomings; striving to correct our flaws and failures; being free from pride and arrogance.

If we have integrity, we don't deceive others or ourselves.

Without humility, pride blinds us to all of our faults.

Humility is not thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less.

FORTITUDE

The habit of the doing what is right and necessary in the face of difficulty; the mental and emotional strength, the 'inner toughness', to endure suffering and overcome adversity; exhibiting qualities such as confidence, courage, perseverance, and resilience when challenging circumstances demand them.

Fortitude includes COURAGE, the habit of overcoming fear when facing physical danger or social pressure to do what's wrong.

They would need fortitude to endure the difficult journey ahead.

Moral courage—standing up for what's right when it's unpopular to do so—is rarer than bravery in battle.

SELF-CONTROL

The habit of self-restraint; the mastery and moderation of our desires, emotions, impulses, and appetites; resisting temptation; delaying gratification in order to achieve a higher goal.

In the absence of self-control, our desires control us.

JUSTICE

The habit of treating everyone with equal respect and fairness; fulfilling our responsibilities; taking responsibility for our actions, sincerely admitting when we've done wrong, and making amends; recognising that no one—including ourselves—is 'above the law'.

Justice requires us to treat everyone with respect, take responsibility for our actions, and recognise that no one has the right to do wrong.

Six Virtues in 12 Extracts

Two extracts per virtue:

- Extract 1 - Lucy was Very Miserable (Integrity 1)
- Extract 2 - Edmund and the Turkish Delight (Self-Control 1)
- Extract 3 - Edmund Wants More Turkish Delight (Self-Control 2)
- Extract 4 - Lucy Sticks to Her Story (Fortitude 1)
- Extract 5 - Peter and Susan Seek Advice (Wisdom 1)
- Extract 6 - Mr Tumnus' Home is Wrecked (Justice 1)
- Extract 7 - Edmund Betrays Them (Integrity 2)
- Extract 8 - Peter Owns Up (Justice 2)
- Extract 9 - Peter Did Not Feel Very Brave (Fortitude 2)
- Extract 10 - Edmund is Forgiven (Love 1)
- Extract 11 - Aslan Instead of Edmund (Love 2)
- Extract 12 - It Was All Edmund's Doing (Wisdom 2)



Mr Tumnus showed Lucy the way back home.

Extract 1: Lucy Was Very Miserable (Integrity 1)

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE by C.S. Lewis copyright © C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. 1950

For the next few days she was very miserable. She could have made it up with the others quite easily at any moment if she could have brought herself to say that the whole thing was only a story made up for fun. But Lucy was a very truthful girl and she knew that she was really in the right; and she could not bring herself to say this. The others who thought she was telling a lie, and a silly lie too, made her very unhappy. The two elder ones did this without meaning to do it, but Edmund could be spiteful, and on this occasion, he was spiteful. He sneered and jeered at Lucy and kept on asking her if she'd found any other new countries in other cupboards all over the house. What made it worse was that these days ought to have been delightful. The weather was fine and they were out of doors from morning to night, bathing, fishing, climbing trees and lying in the heather. But Lucy could not properly enjoy any of it. And so things went on until the next wet day.

Integrity is the focus virtue here.

We immediately see Lucy's honesty as we read, 'Lucy was a very truthful girl'. She is true to herself and it is her integrity that enables her to endure and to show fortitude.

Being truthful and honest is habitual for Lucy; it is the kind of person she is—she is indeed a 'very truthful girl'.

She suffers and endures for the truth, rather than lying and saying what others want to hear, because she has integrity.

(Edmund's spitefulness demonstrates his lack of the virtue of love.)

What integrity is, and why it's important

(Ethical Evaluation)

1. Integrity is the habit of sticking to and standing up for what is right even when it is difficult and carries a cost. Integrity can be summed up as following one's conscience. It is telling the truth and doing the right thing even when this is hard.
2. Integrity is being true to oneself. The famous line from Shakespeare, 'to thine own self be true' is one of the best known references to integrity. Acting with integrity means you are honest with yourself and also with other people. We see this at work in the way Lucy responds to her siblings.
3. Integrity is part of who Lucy is—her identity as a person, her character. This is the source of her strength of character in this situation. Her integrity enables her to stick to the truth, resist pressure from her siblings to change her story, and bear the suffering that goes with that.

What stands out in this passage is that 'Lucy was a very truthful girl'. She is habitually truthful. Lucy endures suffering for what she believes in and knows to be true. We see in line one that 'she was very miserable' and half way down the page that she was 'very unhappy'. Acting with integrity costs her dearly; she does not take the easy path in life. She could make her suffering disappear 'at any moment if she could bring herself to say that the whole thing was only a story made up for fun'. All her suffering would be gone in an instant if she said what the people around her want to hear, but we read that 'she could not bring herself to say this'. Lucy shows **moral courage** in standing up for what is right when it is unpopular to do so. She is true to herself; she has integrity.

The emphasis on 'herself' is important in terms of teaching character and virtue because this makes it clear that lying would be contrary to—would go against—who Lucy is as a person. She acts with integrity because being truthful is a key part of who she is—a very important aspect of her identity and character.

Every week we provide a list of questions, duplicated in the student workbooks immediately after the extracts. **In the interests of variety and delivering a balanced curriculum, please only use these questions in a way that also maintains the balance of the five Narnian virtues objectives.** We have provided these as a resource to address a range of key skills such as literal and inferential comprehension. We hope they will be useful as the basis of any extra work you would like to do on the Narnia novels. However we would like to stress that these are optional activities. Often these questions may promote a greater ability to understand a virtue, or identify one.

These questions may be used to help students develop their English key skills:

Which words or phrases show that Lucy is honest and has integrity?

'She could have made it up with the others quite easily at any moment'

- The conditional 'could' is used to show choice; virtues, such as integrity, are revealed by choices made by characters.
- 'quite easily': doing the right thing isn't always, or even often, doing the easy thing.

'only a story made up'

- 'only': belittles/debases the experience. This would be deceitful and uncharacteristic for Lucy.
- Further task: in other chapters find another example of Lucy's integrity.

'very truthful girl'

- 'truthful': adjective shows Lucy is honest.
- (Higher level) adjective, 'very': emphasises integrity.

'could not bring herself'

- 'herself': self-hood and identity.
- Telling the truth is not just something that Lucy does; it is who she is as a person and an integral part of her character.

Which words or phrases show that Edmund is dishonest and lacking integrity?

'sneered and jeered'

- Rhyming phonetically mimics taunting.

'kept on'

- Persistence is vindictive.

How does this extract contrast vice and virtue?

Lucy and Edmund are foils—set up as opposites.

What is the impact of this contrast?

It accentuates Lucy's virtue AND Edmund's vice.

Who is speaking in this extract; what does this tell you? (Is it Lewis? Is it a character? Is it a narrator? If so, what kind of narrator is it?)

Omniscient narrator: narrative voice shows who/what is right/wrong, as shown in the quote 'she was really in the right'.

Setting

Literal Question: What four things do the children do outside?

Swim, fish, climb trees, lie in the heather.

Inferential Question: How does Lewis use setting to emphasise Lucy's virtue?

'What made it worse . . . But Lucy could not properly enjoy any of it.'

- *Contrast between good weather/fun activities and Lucy's mood.*
- *(Higher level) opposite of pathetic fallacy – juxtaposition.*

Photocopiable Resources

Edmund's Letter Home

Activity: Imagine how Edmund is feeling at this moment in the story. Write a letter home explaining the difficulties he is having with his siblings from his perspective. You may wish to consider: what has happened; why Edmund believes them to have happened; whether Edmund believes he is justified in acting this way (or whether he feels remorse at his behaviour) and why.

Dear Mother,

Comparison with the Christian Story

From Chapters 13 and 14, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis

'Bind him, I say!' repeated the White Witch. The Hags made a dart at him and shrieked with triumph when they found that he made no resistance at all [...] had the Lion chosen, one of those paws could have been the death of them all. But he made no noise, even when the enemies, straining and tugging, pulled the cords so tight that they cut into his flesh. Then they began to drag him towards the Stone Table. 'Stop!' said the Witch. 'Let him first be shaved'. Another roar of mean laughter went up from her followers as an ogre with a pair of shears came forward and squatted down by Aslan's head. Snip-snip-snip went the shears and masses of curling gold began to fall to the ground. [...]

'Muzzle him!' said the Witch. And even now, as they worked about his face putting on the muzzle, one bite from his jaws would have cost two or three of them their hands. But he never moved. And this seemed to enrage all that rabble. Everyone was at him now. Those who had been afraid to come near him even after he was bound began to find their courage, and for a few minutes the two girls could not even see him—so thickly was he surrounded by the whole crowd of creatures kicking him, hitting him, spitting on him, jeering at him.

The Witch bared her arms as she had bared them the previous night when it had been Edmund instead of Aslan. Then she began to whet her knife.

As last she drew near. She stood by Aslan's head. [...] Then, just before she gave the blow, she stooped down and said in a quivering voice,

'And now, who has won? Fool, did you think that by all this you would save the human traitor? Now I will kill you instead of him as our pact was, and so the Deep Magic will be appeased'. [...] The children did not see the actual moment of the killing. They couldn't bear to look and had covered their eyes.

Compare the death of Aslan with the death of Jesus:

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Matthew 27:27-31

(King James Version, 1611)

- Explain the similarity between what happened to Aslan on the Stone Table and the Easter Story in the New Testament.
- Why do you think C.S. Lewis wrote in this way, with an allegorical meaning in this part of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*? Do you think it works?
- Explain the link between Aslan's sacrifice and Edmund's forgiveness.

Reading and Believing

Good character is for everyone, and the Narnian Virtues Curriculum is designed for all schools, whether secular or faith-based, and for a wide range of children from different families and communities. Laura Miller shows us in *The Magician's Book: A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia*, that Narnia is not just for Christians.

'It is certainly possible', Lickona states, 'to be an ethical person without being religious, and having faith by no means guarantees that a person will be good. But for many persons, religion gives life a higher meaning and an ultimate reason for leading a moral life' (2004, p. 57).

In our pilot study (Pike, Lickona and Nesfield, 2015) we observed an interesting phenomenon: in class, the Muslim children drew upon their faith in thinking about and practising virtue, but the Christian children did not. When discussing self-control as a class, the Muslim young people referred to Ramadan and the self-discipline that fasting required.

We feel it is important for young people, if they so choose, to bring what they 'believe in' to their character development. Consequently, it is important that students for whom a faith commitment is important should not feel obliged to 'secularise' their responses and to leave their beliefs and faith out of their efforts to develop good character.

To ensure that students feel free to draw on all their beliefs when they reflect on their character, we'd appreciate your offering them the following explicit encouragement:

You have complete freedom of expression in this curriculum. We want you to respond as a whole person. You have a right as a student to bring in all of your beliefs, including your religious beliefs, when you speak and write about your character and what gives you the knowledge and strength to do the right thing.

For example, if you believe that your faith's holy book of wisdom guides you in knowing what's right, or that God helps you do what you know is right, you should feel completely free to say that in class discussions, journal entries, focus groups, and conversations with your parents when you work on the Narnian Virtues Home Activities together.

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