

The lion, the witch and the wardrobe



C. S Lewis wrote the novel *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* initially for his Goddaughter in order to keep her in touch with Christianity. What Lewis did not realize is that many adults would also enjoy the fantasy children's novel as well. The narrative is filled with mythical creatures, humorous moments, and suspenseful situations. Although many events and characters seem improbable, the four children in the book—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy—are realistically portrayed as well-rounded characters with individual strengths and faults.

Although the novel is recognized as a children's fantasy book, it is also popular with adults as the story contains bits of modern culture, vivid descriptions of violence and is heavy on Christian allegory. As much as the readers enjoy the magical land of Narnia, 21st century life is not exactly full of Dryads, Naiads and Fauns frolicking and feasting in the summer woods. By contrast, in today's children's fantasy novels, not every injustice is punished, and not all the good people live happily ever after: some of them die, because that is reality.

Between school shootings, gang violence and child abuse it seems as though reality is thousands of miles away from the fantasy of complete and total justice in Narnia. What readers of all ages can relate to, however, is betrayal. For example, spouses who cheat, employees who steal from their employers, and friends who tell lies. This modern idea of betrayal is where readers from any age can relate to the novel. In the narrative, Edmund's first betrayal is a small but unpleasant one: "Up to that moment Edmund had been feeling sick, and sulky, and annoyed with Lucy for being right, but he hadn't made up his mind what to do.

When Peter suddenly asked him the question he decided all at once to do the meanest and most spiteful thing he could think of. He decided to let Lucy down” (Lewis 48). Edmund lies about his trip to Narnia in order to make himself look superior in the eyes of his older siblings. This small cruelty will pave the way for his greater betrayal further in the story. Readers of any age can connect with the modern culture of betrayal in the novel, where minimal details are explored that over time lead to Edmund turning his back on his siblings.

This novel features an odd mix of childish adventure and bloody battles. Young children who read this story enjoy the fairy-tale aspects, while older readers can appreciate the repetition of scenes in which the children are often comforted by the sudden availability of tea, and the way the forces of good seem to always outweigh the evil. The use of violence throughout the novel deals strictly with fantasy for children, where it is mainly used for excitement. On the other hand, for older readers the violence in the novel can be seen as consequential where extreme force is used as simply last resort.

For example, as the head of the forces of evil, the White Witch is not playing a long hand when she exclaims, “ Summon all our people to meet me here as speedily as they can. Call out the giants and the werewolves and the spirits of those trees who are on our side. Call the Ghouls, and the Boggles, the Ogres and the Minotaurs. Call the Cruels, the Hags, the Spectres, and the people of the Toadstools. We will fight” (Lewis 149) There are many different creatures in Narnia that follow the White Witch and she merely acts as their stone cold captain.

This quote explores evil where it is not an isolated incident in Narnia – it is the idea of violence and commands a great deal of power. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe functions as a spiritual allegory where one does not have to be too familiar with the Bible to recognize some of the key characters and themes. Without doubt, Aslan represents Jesus Christ, and also God himself, whereas the White Witch represents Satan. Narnia, where the adventure happens, visibly represents the Kingdom of God. Clearly there is no direct retelling of any of the Bible stories; however, readers can find elements taken and redistributed for younger readers.

In addition, having this biblical reality come to life is important to ensure a committed Christian lifestyle not only for children, but also for adults. For instance, when Edmund arrives in Narnia alone, he immediately meets the White Witch where he is tempted with the enchanted Turkish Delight and the promise of becoming a prince of Narnia. The White Witch explains to Edmund, “ I think I would like to make you the Prince - some day, when you bring the others to visit me” (Lewis 40). Succumbing to temptation is a very powerful theme in the Bible, where Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness with promises of great power.

Not only does Lewis restate certain events in the life of Jesus in a context that is easy to understand, most importantly, readers of all ages can both relate to and enjoy the fantasy of Narnia. An understanding of the modern reality, use of violence and Biblical allegory in the novel is essential in satisfying both younger and older readers. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe has already established itself as a timeless novel that appeals to

both the atheists and Christians, the uneducated and to scholars, and lastly to children and adults.

In addition to being a children's fantasy book, it is an adventure story in which the heroes set out on a quest to recover their kidnapped friend and end up ruling the land. An analysis of this narrative, however, allows readers of any age to fully appreciate Lewis' unique gift to simplify complex ideas and craft beautiful children's fantasies. Thus, this allows the reader of any age group to gain a deeper understanding of Lewis as a skilled creative writer and a deeper satisfaction of his artwork, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.