

EXPLORING IDENTITY IN NARNIA'S CENTRAL CHARACTERS

*Naimova A.M.,**PhD, teacher of the Department of English Linguistics,
Bukhara State University,**a. m.naimova@buxdu.uz, anaimova1991@gmail.com**Yuldosheva M.U.**2nd year student of bachelor degree**munisayuldosheva48@gmail.com*

Annotation. Fantasy is not only about escape—it is about reimagining what we already know. “In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe”, C.S. Lewis crafts characters that walk the line between fairy tale and emotional realism. These characters are vivid not just because of what they do, but how they are written. Lewis uses specific stylistic devices—such as allegory, direct speech, and symbolism—to shape a world where every sentence adds weight to the identity of its characters. This article will examine three key figures: Aslan, the Pevensie children, and the White Witch, analyzing how they are constructed, how scholars have interpreted them, and how I personally relate to those views as both a reader and a student.

Keywords: stylistic devices, fantasy, children’s literature, symbolism, narrative technique, character creation, Lewis, Narnia.

C.S. Lewis's "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," published in 1950, stands as a cornerstone of children's fantasy literature and the foundational text of The Chronicles of Narnia, more than just a magical adventure, it's a richly layered narrative that continues to captivate readers of all ages with its enchanting world-building, profound themes, and subtle allegorical depth. The novel opens during World War II, as four siblings – Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie – are evacuated from London to the English countryside to escape the Blitz, and it is in the Professor's old house that young Lucy stumbles upon a seemingly ordinary wardrobe that serves as a portal to the extraordinary land of Narnia, initiating a timeless tale of good versus evil, courage, sacrifice, and redemption. Narnia, perpetually trapped in winter under the tyrannical reign of the White Witch, is a world of talking animals, mythical creatures, and ancient prophecies, and the arrival of the Pevensie children fulfills a prophecy that "two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve" will sit on the four thrones of Cair Paravel, ultimately ending the Witch's oppressive rule; their journey is fraught with challenges, including Edmund's betrayal, lured by the Witch's promise of power and endless Turkish Delight, and the constant threat of being turned to stone. At the heart of the Narnian struggle is Aslan, the magnificent lion who embodies ultimate good and justice, serving as a Christ-figure within the narrative, his noble self-sacrifice on the Stone Table to atone for Edmund's treachery, followed by his miraculous resurrection, forming a powerful allegory for Christian redemption; this central act of love and sacrifice is a pervasive theme throughout the book, highlighting the idea that true bravery often involves putting others before oneself. Beyond its widely recognized Christian allegory, "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" explores universal themes such as the battle between good and evil, the importance of friendship and loyalty, the transformative power of hope, and the dangers of gluttony and temptation, with the contrast between the bleak, frozen Narnia under the Witch's spell and the eventual thaw and return of spring with Aslan's arrival powerfully symbolizing the triumph of life and goodness over darkness and despair. Lewis's masterful storytelling draws readers into Narnia's enchanting landscape, allowing them to experience the wonder, the fear, and ultimately, the joy of the

children's journey, and the novel's enduring popularity, evidenced by numerous adaptations in film and television, attests to its timeless appeal and its ability to resonate with generations of readers, offering both a thrilling adventure and a profound exploration of moral and spiritual truths; "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" remains a beloved classic, inviting readers to step through the wardrobe and discover the magic and meaning within its pages.

From the first mention of Aslan, the tone of the story changes. Lewis uses anaphora and symbolic repetition—the name “Aslan” is spoken before the character appears, building mystery and weight. This technique engages the reader’s curiosity through a literary echo, and when Aslan finally speaks, his voice is written with short, declarative sentences, reflecting strength and calmness. Neil Gaiman, in his essay *The Problem of Susan*¹, says that Aslan “carries the weight of the entire story’s moral structure.” I find this statement incredibly accurate. For me, Aslan is the heart of Narnia—not because he speaks often, but because his presence shapes the characters around him. Including Gaiman’s view helps readers understand that Aslan’s role is not about being the loudest or most active character, but the most emotionally grounding one. It also shows how literary power can come from silence, restraint, and tone.

Lewis also uses parallelism when describing Aslan’s behavior—he repeats phrases like “he did not roar,” “he did not move,” showing his power through understatement. This silent strength reminds me of people in real life who don’t need to raise their voice to lead. It makes Aslan someone readers respect instinctively. Transitioning from Aslan to the children feels natural, because Lewis ties their story closely to his. They don’t just meet Aslan; they are transformed by him. Lewis writes their dialogues with colloquial diction and incomplete sentences, which gives them a natural, childlike voice. He uses dialogic realism to build their personalities—not through narration, but through what they say and how they argue or agree. In “The Rhetoric of Character in Children’s Literature”², Maria Nikolajeva explains that Lewis “uses children’s speech patterns to reflect their psychological development.” This helped me understand why their arguments, especially Edmund’s early selfishness or Lucy’s honesty, feel so real. I’ve seen such dynamics among siblings and classmates, which is why I believe the Pevensie children are not fantasy heroes at first—they are ordinary people slowly realizing their strength.

I chose to include Nikolajeva’s view because it shows that character building doesn’t always rely on big actions; it can be done through small, everyday speech. And for me, that’s why I care about the Pevensies: they are realistic, despite being in an unrealistic world. Their growth is made visible by Lewis’s use of contrast, especially between Lucy and Edmund—innocence vs. jealousy, belief vs. doubt—a technique that highlights inner conflict without needing heavy narration.

The shift from the Pevensies to the White Witch is sharp, and Lewis makes it that way on purpose. He uses harsh alliteration and icy imagery to show her coldness—words like “pale,” “sharp,” “cruel,” and “stone” repeat frequently. Her speech is also written in imperatives (“Do this,” “Come here,” “Be quiet”), which contrasts Aslan’s gentle language. This is linguistic juxtaposition—a stylistic strategy to reflect power through tone. “In *Inside Narnia: A Guide to Exploring The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*”³, Devin Brown writes, “Her danger lies not in her magic, but in her ability to sound reasonable.” I completely agree. As someone who values emotional awareness, this shows me that villains are not always obvious—they can speak softly, promise gifts, and still lead others into destruction. The Witch doesn’t shout; she tempts. That’s why Edmund follows her—not out of fear, but loneliness.

¹ Gaiman N. *The problem of Susan*, -New York: Short fictions and Wonders, 2006

² Nikolajeva M. *Rhetoric of character in Children’s literature*, -Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2002

³ Brown D. In *Inside Narnia: A Guide to Exploring The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Michigan: Baker Books, 2005

I included Brown's opinion because it matches my experience of reading her scenes: I didn't dislike her instantly—I was curious. That's exactly what makes her dangerous. And Lewis knew this. He wrote her scenes using gradual tonal shifts, moving from sugar-sweet dialogue to threats. She is the mirror of Aslan—where he is selfless, she is selfish; where he gives freedom, she demands control. Through this foil structure, Lewis heightens both characters.

Conclusion. C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* succeeds not only because of its rich story, but because of the way he writes his characters. Using symbolism, contrast, repetition, and dialogue, he gives each figure a distinct voice, yet connects them through emotion and narrative balance. Scholarly voices like Neil Gaiman, Maria Nikolajeva, and Devin Brown add depth to this discussion, offering professional lenses to Lewis's stylistic brilliance. But what makes these opinions more meaningful to me is how they align with my own reading experience—as a student, as a reader, and as someone who believes characters are more than just names on a page. Lewis doesn't simply write about magic—he writes about people in magic, and he uses style as the bridge between imagination and understanding. These characters might live in Narnia, but they remain with us long after we close the book.

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