

My favorite author is a man who never had any children of his own, yet wrote some of the most beloved children's stories of all times. C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) was an Oxford scholar and Christian apologist. His best-known work is *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a fantasy series about a land ruled by a lion called Aslan. It is written for children, but adults like these books as well. Aslan represents Christ and I learned a lot about Christianity when I read these adventures. C.S. Lewis also wrote books for adults that are considered Christian classics. *Mere Christianity* is a small book that explains the central beliefs of the Christian faith with analogies and classic reasoning. It influenced many famous people who became Christians: Chuck Colson, Francis S. Collins, George Gallup, Jr., and Phillip Yancey, for example. C.S. Lewis is my favorite author because his books helped me come to faith in Christ, too.

Comment [DAB1]: This is my topic.

Comment [DAB2]: Background reader needs to understand who C.S. Lewis is.

Comment [DAB3]: Concluding statement of first paragraph is my thesis statement.

During college, a professor suggested I read *Mere Christianity*. It was the first intellectual defense of the Christian faith I read, and that is what I needed. Lewis' analogies were amusing and convincing. For instance, he famously wrote that a man who said the things Jesus said must either be who he said he is—the Son of God—or “a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg....” I had to make a choice, Lewis insisted. I couldn't claim Jesus was just a good moral teacher. Later he writes, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” That observation convinced me heaven must indeed exist, and I needed to consider this man's explanation for how I might get there.

Comment [DAB4]: My first reason.

Comment [DAB5]: Evidence

Comment [DAB6]: More evidence

Comment [DAB7]: Reasoning.

From *Mere Christianity*, I moved on to Lewis' fiction: *The Chronicles of Narnia* and his space trilogy. The worlds he created were fantasy, but his characters were just like you and me. Even in other times and places, they struggled with making the right choices. For example, Ransom, the hero of the space trilogy, is summoned by Maleldil (an archangel-like creature) to Mars to help save the inhabitants there from a fall from grace. Ransom makes the right choices, but not without Lewis showing us how difficult it is for Ransom to trust God, be brave, and risk his life for others. He's a very ordinary man who still manages to be heroic.

Comment [DAB8]: My next reason.

Comment [DAB9]: Evidence

Comment [DAB10]: evidence of how he is like you and me.

However, the book that influenced me the most was *Till We Have Faces*. This is one of Lewis' lesser known novels, but it addresses one of the key arguments that kept me away from Christianity: With so much pain and suffering in the world, how can the Bible claim that God is love? *Till We Have Faces* retells the myth of Cupid and Psyche from the point of view of Orual, a jealous and unattractive older sister. As the story unfolds, we realize Orual's corrupt human love for her sister blinds her understanding of God's love in the same way our own sin blinds us.

Comment [DAB11]: This is my third, and most important reason. Notice the transitional words and phrases I use to show the logical progression of ideas.

My introduction to Lewis took place more than thirty years ago. There have been long periods of time when I have not read his books, and I moved on to other Christian authors and theologians. But whenever I find myself in seasons of doubt or difficulty, I always return to reading Lewis. Somewhere in one of his novels or his apologetics, I know I will find an analogy or spiritual insight that perfectly applies to my life circumstances. Not only are his books imaginative and engaging, they are also life-giving. And that is why he is my favorite.

Comment [DAB12]: Why this is most influential book.

Comment [DAB13]: My conclusion is a summary but it still adds new information. I trace the history of my relationship with C.S. Lewis.

Comment [DAB14]: A summary reason that includes all my other reasons.

Comment [DAB15]: My concluding statement links back to my opening statement.

Examples of acceptable evidence:

- Facts and statistics (numbers)
- Details
- Quotes
- Definitions
- Examples
- Anecdotes
- Recognition of the opposition

Two strategies for quickly creating a thesis for synthesis and argument essays:

1. Take a position that answers either “why” or “how” the issue or idea raised by the prompt is beneficial or detrimental.
2. Give three reasons or examples that support the “why” or “how” position you stake out.
3. Develop the three reasons or examples into three paragraphs of well-developed support for your thesis.

Example 1:

Issue: Should the USPS be restructured, and if so, how?

Sample Thesis: The USPS should be restructured **by** reducing the number of delivery days, closing low volume offices, and expanding Internet-based services.

Better Thesis: **Because** the USPS is still an important part of our history and culture, the USPS should be restructured **by** reducing the number of delivery days, closing low volume offices, and expanding Internet-based services.

Example 2:

Task: Take a position on the *relationship* between certainty and doubt.

Sample Thesis: The **battle** between certainty and doubt is essential **because** it leads to human progress and insight.

Better Thesis: The battle between certainty and doubt within each of us contributes to our **maturation** **by** clarifying our thinking, broadening our perspective and generating new ideas and **possibilities**.

Try this with the argument prompt this week or with the essay prompts on the second practice exam next week if you get stuck.

Comment [d1]: Use “by” to answer the question “how.”

Comment [d2]: A paragraph will need to be devoted to developing and exemplifying each of these solutions.

Comment [d3]: Use “because” to answer the question “why.”

Comment [d4]: The second paragraph of this essay will need to be devoted to defending this reason.

Comment [d5]: Paragraphs 3-5 will be used to develop and exemplify each of these solutions.

Comment [d6]: This is the way I’m choosing to characterize the relationship between certainty and doubt.

Comment [d7]: I could include a paragraph discussing in general how wrestling with belief and doubt is an important part of our growth as individuals.

Comment [d8]: Here are my three main paragraphs and I will think of examples of issues I’ve wrestled with and consider how both faith and skepticism helped me 1)clarify what I thought, 2) broadened my view and 3) generated new solutions.



Six Traits

The six traits are cogs in a well-oiled machine that work together to produce a finished product that will keep your readers reading!

Ideas

The clear, focused, interesting, and well-developed message I have for my readers.

Sentence Structure

The way I build my sentences with phrases and clauses so they make sense and sound pleasing to my readers.

Organization

The pattern I use to organize my ideas so that readers can follow my logic.

writing Model

Voice

The way I insert my personality into my writing so my readers recognize that I am the author.

Conventions

The standards of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and usage I carefully follow so my readers are not distracted or confused.

Word Choice

The specific and wide variety of nouns, verbs, and modifiers I use to show my readers precisely what I mean.



Traits	9-10	8	7- 6	5
Introduction & Conclusion Score _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduction is powerful and insightful and presents the thesis in clear response to the prompt. ➤ Appropriately introduces author and work. ➤ The conclusion is graceful and leads to powerful abstractions (insight). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduction is interesting, meaningful and presents the thesis/main purpose clearly. ➤ Appropriately introduces author and work. ➤ The conclusion brings the essay to a close, but does so less powerfully or memorably. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduction is adequate and presents thesis in a general way. ➤ Thesis indirectly addresses the prompt. ➤ Conclusion goes nowhere, simply repeats the introduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduction is empty of meaning. ➤ Thesis does not address the prompt. ➤ Thesis may not be evident or clearly understood. ➤ The conclusion is empty of meaning or missing.
Ideas & Content Score _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The writing conveys ideas in a controlled and interesting manner. ➤ The focus is clearly stated and maintained throughout. ➤ Clear, relevant details, directions, examples, and/or anecdotes develop and enrich the central focus. Unpack the thesis. ➤ Primary and secondary ideas are developed in proportion to their significance; the writing is balanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The writing presents important information about a specific focus by providing facts and examples. ➤ The focus is stated and maintained throughout. ➤ Primary and secondary ideas are developed in proportion to their significance; the writing has a sense of balance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The writing presents information about a specific focus by providing a few facts and examples from the text. ➤ The focus is stated and sometimes maintained ➤ An attempt is made to develop primary and secondary ideas. ➤ The writing has a limited sense of balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The writing presents information about a topic by providing facts or examples from the text. ➤ The focus remains unclear. ➤ Primary and secondary ideas lack a sense of development and/or balance.
Organization Score _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Writing is organized in a way that enhances the meaning or helps to develop the central idea. (thesis) ➤ Each developmental paragraph addresses a specific aspect of the topic. ➤ The sequence is effective and moves the reader through the paper – the order may or may not be conventional. ➤ Transitions work well and help support the logical inter-connection of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Writing is clearly organized in a way that enhances meaning or helps to develop the central idea. (thesis) ➤ Each developmental paragraph addresses a specific aspect of the topic. ➤ Transitions work well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The writing is fairly organized. ➤ Each developmental paragraph attempts to address a specific aspect of the thesis. ➤ Transitions are limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The writing needs more structure. ➤ Developmental paragraphs are limited in focus and may be confusing. ➤ Transitions need improvement.
Sentence Fluency Score _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong and varied sentence structure (syntax) clearly conveys meaning and invites expressive reading. ➤ Sentences are appropriately concise. ➤ The writing has a natural flow and rhythm when read aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong and varied sentence beginnings, lengths and structure help to convey meaning and invite expressive reading. ➤ Sentences are appropriately concise. ➤ The writing sounds smooth and rhythmic when read aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Varied sentence beginnings, length, and structure help to convey meaning. ➤ Sentences are sometimes concise and sometimes wordy. ➤ The writing sounds businesslike or mechanical when read aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sentences beginnings, length and, structure lack variation. ➤ The writing lacks fluency when read aloud.

<p>Word Choice</p> <p>Score _____</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Well-chosen words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise and natural way. ➤ Expression is fresh and appealing; original or unusual phrasing adds to meaning. Figurative language, if used, is effective. ➤ Vocabulary is striking but not overdone. Technical terms and notations are accurate and effective. ➤ Lively, powerful verbs provide energy. (To be verbs are very limited) ➤ Specific nouns add color and clarity. ➤ Modifiers work to provide strong imagery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Well-chosen words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise and natural way. ➤ Expressions attempt to be fresh and appealing. Original or unusual phrasing adds to the meaning. Figurative language, if used, is generally effective. ➤ Vocabulary is striking but, at times, overdone. Technical terms and notations are accurate and effective. ➤ Powerful verbs, specific nouns, and descriptive modifiers enhance meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Words are reasonably accurate and convey the intended message in a general manner. ➤ Expression is limited. Figurative language, if used, may or may not be effective. Vocabulary is either common or slang, or attempts to be uncommon and leads to confusion. ➤ Technical terms and notations are limited, or inaccurate and limited in effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Word choice limits the clarity of the intended message. ➤ Expression is lacking. Vocabulary is limited and restricted. ➤ Technical terms used to write about literature are absent.
<p>Support CSE: Claim/Support/Explanation (Warrant)</p> <p>Score _____</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support is detailed, specific, correct and incorporated into writer's own sentences. Level of support is consistent throughout. ➤ CSE is clear and convincingly proves thesis. ➤ CSE is pulled exclusively from the text and/or background knowledge from the literary canon. ➤ CSE is not derived from personal experience, generalization, over-reaching, conjecture, or personal beliefs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support is less detailed, less specific, awkwardly embedded or less consistent. ➤ Support from the text only partially prove thesis. ➤ Evidence from the canon is not significantly relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support is mostly paraphrased rather than direct. Some quoted passages are too long and then not developed (CSE is weak). ➤ Support is from a mix of sources, including personal experience or beliefs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is little or no support. ➤ The writer rambles and doesn't follow CSE
<p>Insight</p> <p>Score _____</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discussion shows grasp of complexities, ambiguities and contradictions. ➤ Discussion shows grasp of inference, nuance and connotation. ➤ Discussion shows understanding of how the author's tone, and use of allusion, figurative language or irony creates meaning. ➤ Essay reveals a sophisticated understanding of the passage/reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Shows some grasp of complexities, ambiguities and contradictions. ➤ Shows some grasp of inference, nuance and connotation. ➤ Recognizes the presence of irony, and artistry. ➤ Is somewhat sophisticated in understanding of the passage/reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Discussion is simplistic, obvious or dualistic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The passage was misread.

Powerful – I am looking for commitment, not wishy-washy stance. Power is associated with confident positioning. Use words that carry this meaning. They say, “Mrs. Bell, I’ve thought long and hard about the question raised by the prompt, I’ve considered the possibility, and now I’ve chosen a position which I am prepared to defend until the “last, full measure of my reasoning powers are spilt out in ink upon this page.”

Insightful – The writer’s ability to read literature sensitively, perceptively and analytically are evidenced by the insight they have into the text.

Controlled – The writer is not rambling, un-directed or confused. The language used conveys logical thought and orderly progression of ideas.

Focus – another way of saying “thesis”. This is the controlling idea. In AP writing, it is the position you seek to prove.

Thesis – provides the focus. It is the defensible position you take; much as a general might position his troops along a ridge in battle. And then you prove your position is wise and defensible with the artillery of your support from the text.

Expressive – denotes emphasis. As I read your essay aloud, I recognize through the organization of a particular sentence, which words should be stressed and which words support the emphasis. The word order helps to signal to the reader what ideas in the sentence are important and most closely related to the thesis being supported.

Dualistic – boiling down the meaning to a black and white; either/or interpretation. It strips the passage of any complexity or subtleties – characters are good or evil; theme is over-generalized – the author shows slavery is wrong; tone is simplistic – the author likes this character and dislikes this one.