

# STAGING SERVICES JOURNEY TO... NARNIA

The Chronicles of Narnia is a series of seven fantasy novels by C. S. Lewis. Originally published in London between 1950 and 1956, The Chronicles of Narnia has been adapted several times, complete or in part, for radio, television, the stage, and film.

Set in the fictional realm of Narnia, a fantasy world of magic, mythical beasts, and talking animals, the series narrates the adventures of various children who play central roles in the unfolding history of that world. The children from the real world are magically transported to Narnia, where they are called upon by the lion Aslan to protect Narnia from evil and restore the throne to its rightful line.

Inspiration for the series was taken from multiple sources; in addition to traditional Christian themes, Lewis freely borrowed characters from Greek and Roman mythology as well as from traditional British and Irish fairy tales. Lewis's exploration of themes not usually present in children's literature, such as religion, as well as the books' perceived treatment of issues including race and gender, has caused some controversy.

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## Here are nine things you should know about the Lewis' beloved novels:

1. The name 'Narnia' is a Latin word, referring to a town in ancient Italy called 'Narni'.
2. Lewis first thought of Narnia in 1939, but didn't finish writing the first book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, until a decade later in 1949. Lewis said of the idea for the book, "The Lion all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood."
3. Lewis believed the series should be read in the chronological order of the events covered in the books. But most readers, critics, and scholars believe they should be read in the order the books were published.
4. Lewis Scholar Michael Ward has proposed a theory that that Lewis deliberately constructed the Chronicles of Narnia out of the imagery of the seven heavens. According to sixteenth century astrologers the seven heavens contained the seven planets which revolved around Earth and exerted influences over people and events.
5. 'Aslan', the name of the central Lion character in the Narnia Chronicles, is the Turkish word for 'lion'. Although Aslan is the only character to appear in all seven books, he never appeared in the first draft of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.
6. The character of Puddleglum, who appears as a principal character in *The Silver Chair*, was based on Fred Paxford, who served as a handyman, gardener, and occasional cook for over 30 years at Lewis' home (the Kilns) in Oxford.
7. Although there are several maps of the Narnian universe available, the one considered the "official" version was published in 1972 by the books' illustrator, Pauline Baynes. (Illustration copyright © C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd.)
8. In a letter to a fifth-grade class, Lewis explained that Aslan is not meant simply to "represent" Jesus: "Let us suppose that there were a land like Narnia and that the Son of God, as He became a Man in our world, became a Lion there, and then imagine what would happen."

