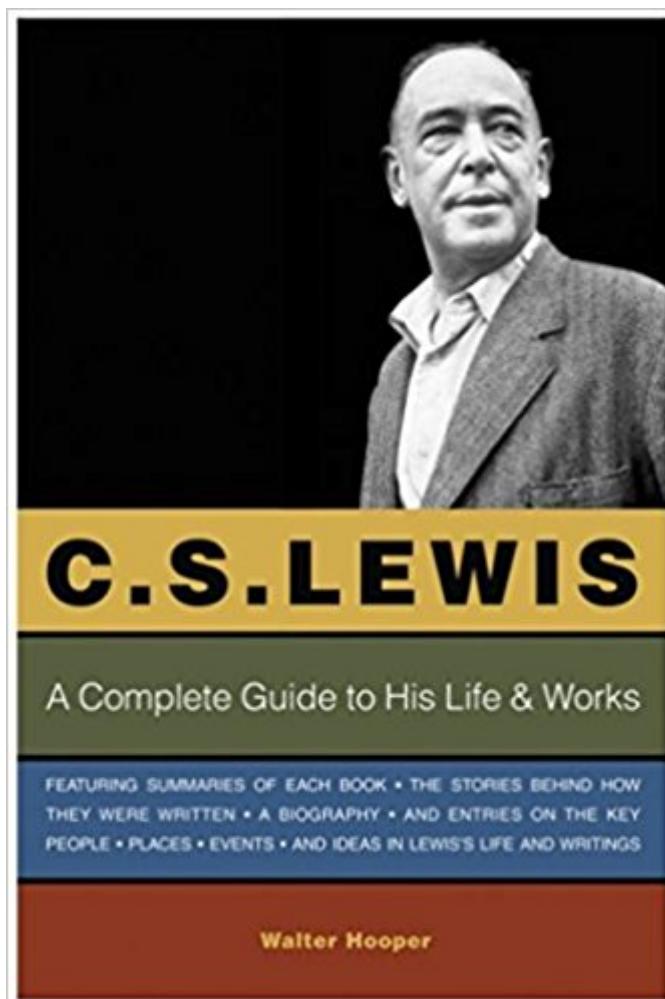


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C. S. Lewis: A Complete Guide To His Life & Works



Synopsis

A complete guide to C. S. Lewis' life & works.

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Customer Reviews

What more can be said about C.S. Lewis who, though dead for over 30 years, still figures prominently on religion bestseller lists, provides grist for graduate theses and fuels not a few acrimonious debates? No new revelations are forthcoming from Hooper, Lewis's secretary during the summer before his death. Rather, he has assembled available information, arranging it chronologically, alphabetically and topically in this introduction to Lewis's life and times. Section one is a straightforward biography rife with references to Lewis's writings and to the explanatory entries in the three sections that follow: "Who's Who," mini-biographies of Lewis's most formative friends and associates; "What's What," definitions and place descriptions; and "Key Ideas," summaries of Lewis's attitudes toward subjects as diverse as quiddity and pagan Christs. The entries in the last three sections are too few and too long to serve as a complete Lewis encyclopedia, but many are fascinating essays in their own right. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Designed to deepen the appreciation and understanding of new Lewis readers and longtime enthusiasts alike, this comprehensive companion provides invaluable biographical, textual and historical insight into C. S. Lewis' remarkable personal, spiritual and intellectual legacy. Walter

Hooper, an eminent C. S. Lewis scholar and one of the trustees of the C. S. Lewis estate, has created an accessible, organized, all-in-one resource that features: A complete chronological biography that traces Lewis' life from his childhood in Belfast and war experience in France to his brilliant academic career at Oxford and Cambridge, through his religious conversion, the publication of each of his books, and his late marriage and widowhood. A Who's Who listing of Lewis' family, teachers, pupils, spiritual mentors and friends, including Dorothy L. Sayers, J. R. R. Tolkien, and the "Inklings," a circle of friends with whom Lewis gathered for some 30 years to share compositions and "enjoy a golden age of talk about poetry, language, myth and imagination." A What's What guide to the significance of places and things, from The Book of Common Prayer to the Cherbourg House preparatory school where a young Lewis "ceased to be a Christian." A Key Ideas exploration of Lewis' thoughts on everything from enchantment, reason, imagination and joy to democratic education, myth and the masculine and feminine. Giving thoughtful attention to each of Lewis' writings, and filled with telling detail, the C. S. Lewis Companion and Guide offers Lewis readers unparalleled access to the life and life's work of an extraordinary man. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

C. S. Lewis would doubtless have scoffed at the idea of a reference book about himself, just as he disapproved of university courses devoted to modern authors on the sensible ground that "helps" to reading them are not needed and come between the writer and his audience. Nonetheless, students and "fans" of the great Christian apologist and literary scholar now are offered two thick compendia on his life and work. Each has its virtues and faults, and both are worthwhile investments - though not a substitute for the straight, unfiltered Lewis. The "Companion and Guide", reviewed here, is the production of one man, who has devoted almost his entire adult lifetime to editing and writing about Lewis. The rival "C. S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia" is a composite work whose contributors range from giants in the field to eager amateurs. When he first met C. S. Lewis in June 1963, Walter Hooper was an American schoolteacher who had dropped out of studying for the Episcopal priesthood and never gotten started as a graduate student in literature. Instantly star-struck, he volunteered to help with secretarial chores. Within a few months Lewis was dead of a heart attack, and this 32-year-old foreigner, whose academic credentials consisted of a master's degree in education and who had never published a word on any Lewisan topic, improbably became the great man's de facto literary executor. Within a year he had edited the first collected edition of Lewis' poems, and he has worked at the same stand ever since. The double meaning of the present volume's title is no accident. The book is a companion and guide to readers of Lewis' work, but

Lewis has also been, metaphorically, a lifetime companion and guide to Walter Hooper. "Companion and Guide" weighs in at almost a thousand pages (twice the length of the "Readers' Encyclopedia"). It leads off with a hundred page biography that may well be the best life of Lewis yet written (not that the competition is very formidable). The next and longest section discusses each of CSL's books, with the inexplicable omission of "The Allegory of Love", his seminal tome on courtly love and medieval poetry. Of greatest interest are the accounts of how the works came to be written, which draw on Lewis' vast, incompletely published correspondence and on conversations with his large circle of friends. Also provided are epitomes, which are useful for reference but sometimes flabby, and haphazard excerpts from book reviews. The last feature calls attention to one of the Companion's defects: Hooper is too much a Lewis partisan to pay much attention to detractors. The uniform, almost gushing, praise of the quotations is not representative of contemporary reaction to Lewis. It would be very surprising if smashing modern idols had made him popular among the high priests of idolatry. Closely related to the discussions of the works are short essays on "Key Ideas". Relatively long pieces summarize Lewis' positions on such topics as "Imagination", "Natural Law" and "Reason". Shorter ones range from "Bulverism" to "Monarchy" to "Quiddity". These rapid presentations of Lewis' point of view, quoting liberally from his own words, are excellent as far as they go, but have little critical depth. Next come a "Who's Who" of people who were important to Lewis, a miscellaneous "What's What" of places, organizations, concepts, terms and facts ("The Kilns", "Oxford University Socratic Club", "Anthroposophy", "Don(s)", "Stage Plays of the Chronicles of Narnia") that relate to Lewis in some fashion, and an 84 page bibliography of everything by Lewis that had appeared in print through about 1996. The strength of the Companion is the immense fund of information that it provides. Its weaknesses are the author's uncritical devotion to his subject and the lacunae in those areas that don't interest him. The academic side of Lewis' career, in particular, is underdeveloped. One finds little about the controversy over the Oxford English curriculum, in which Lewis played a prominent role. As already noted, "The Allegory of Love", which made CSL's reputation as a scholar, gets scant notice. Important essays like "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato", "Donne and Seventeenth Century Love Poetry" and "The Fifteenth-Century Heroic Line" receive none at all. The readers who will find the Companion most useful (and will prefer it to the Readers' Encyclopedia) are those who are interested in CSL primarily as a Christian thinker and novelist and who are more concerned with gaining a fuller appreciation of his writings than in examining what others have written about him. Since another reviewer has raised it, one must address the question of Mr. Hooper's reliability. When he first came to Lewis studies, a callow outsider abruptly elevated beyond his expectations or deserts, he sought to enhance his statute by

falsely claiming a long and intimate association with Lewis. That was a foolish course of action and gained enemies who have hounded him for decades with increasingly sensational accusations. I have no way to judge whether any or all of the charges are well-founded, but they are mostly of interest to biographers of Hooper, not to students of Lewis. Save in marginal areas and subject to normal human frailty, there is no valid reason to impugn the Companion's accuracy. One may leave the last word on this topic to the Readers' Encyclopedia, which, in the course of a far from flattering article about Mr. Hooper, calls the Companion a "landmark volume". Its author may, for all I know, be a bad man, but he is a good encyclopedist.

good information for research.

I was pleasantly surprised by this book. For some reason, I thought it was just a biography, but it is so much more. It should help me to better understand C. S. Lewis and his writings and to understand the world he inhabited. It is so worth the money and I have bought it for someone else and recommended it to others.

Companion and Guide is the sort of reference book that almost always answers the specific question you came in search of and yet whets your appetite for the original texts. I suspect that it would have this effect even on someone who had not yet read the originals. Immensely helpful for teachers even if they know Lewis very well. For example, Peter Kreeft's excellent talk on "Til We Have Faces" (available on his website) seems to have been built around Hooper's entry in this book. It was a great help to me in teaching the Ransom trilogy. Warning: if you are prone -- as I am -- to the vice of curiosity, this book is not always a time-saver. You will find yourself browsing when you meant to be only verifying a fact or running down a citation. Because of the excellent little book that she wrote on Narnia, I would hesitate to speak ill of Kathryn Linskoog even if she were still alive and had not died what I consider to be a heroic Christian death. That said, it would be foolhardy in the extreme to let her later attacks on Hooper (some perhaps just, some quite bizarre, personal, and unsubstantiated) so poison your judgment about him that you miss out on this monumental achievement.

Very thorough guide to the works of C.S. Lewis - both fiction and non-fiction.

Great book.

Debates persist between laypeople and scholars regarding who has the best claim to Mr. Lewis. Some say the "true Lewis," whatever that means, is the sole provenance of his self-proclaimed experts, while others insist that he belongs to his readers. Lewis actually had a say on the matter. He got incensed over the idea that anyone could know a person based on his books, as many have attempted to claim. Thankfully, we have kind Uncle Wally's Companion and Guide to the man and his works, and he does an admirable job of bringing both to life. Mr. Hooper has never felt the pressure of bowing to the guild--nor did Lewis--and as a result his writing is, for lack of a better term, down-to-earth. Having said that, it's hard to say how well someone who only knew Lewis for a few months before his death can know the man himself, but let's admit it: he is one of the few people who actually ever lived with Lewis, and Lewis was particularly forthcoming in sharing his life with Hooper, to the point of giving him access to all of his papers. If that isn't an endorsement, I don't know what is. He trusted Mr. Hooper's instincts, and, as a result, so do I. You want to get a deeper insight into Jack and his works? Read this book.

Having read a great deal of work by and about C.S. Lewis over the last decade, I was surprised by how much I learned from Walter Hooper's superb volume. Hooper looked for information about Lewis from several obscure periodicals to add to his already rich knowledge of Lewisiana, and the rewards are apparent in the brief biography he writes about Lewis, the contemporary book reviews about Lewis's works, and the "Who's Who" and "What's What" sections. I found Hooper's explanatory chapters on Lewis's academic works especially helpful for understanding what Lewis was saying in such literary works as THE DISCARDED IMAGE, ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE 16th CENTURY, and PREFACE TO PARADISE LOST, and his chapters on the fiction and theology of C.S. Lewis are no less erudite and helpful. Whether you have never read anything by Lewis or have read every Lewis title you can get your hands on, C.S. Lewis: COMPANION AND GUIDE will be an entertaining and helpful aid.

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