

# Summer Reading Essay Assignment

## The Screwtape Letters- Holy Family Academy Senior English

Over the summer, seniors will read *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis. While this work is often humorous and clever, it is also deeply theological, philosophical, and psychological. Lewis uses satire to reveal how temptation often operates in everyday life rather than through dramatic evil.

Because this book is widely summarized online, this assignment is intentionally designed to require close, thoughtful reading of the actual text.

You will complete two parts:

1. Annotated Reading Journal (completed while reading)
2. Analytical Essay (submitted during the first week of school)

Both components are required.

### Part I – Annotated Reading Journal

#### “The Patient File”

As you read, you will create a “Patient File” documenting the spiritual decline of the unnamed “patient” throughout the novel.

For at least 15 letters, you must complete the following:

For Each Entry:

- Identify the specific temptation or spiritual weakness being targeted.
- Quote one significant passage directly from the text.
- Explain:
  - Why this temptation is effective
  - Why is it subtle
  - How Lewis shows this temptation appearing in ordinary life
- Connect the temptation to:
  - modern culture,
  - human behavior,

- or personal observations about society today.

Most Important Requirement:

For at least 5 entries, you must identify something in the letter that you initially misunderstood, overlooked, or found surprisingly convincing.

Explain:

- why it challenged you,
- why it is easy to miss
- and what Lewis may be revealing about human nature.

This reflection portion is extremely important and cannot be replaced with a plot summary.

## Part II – Analytical Essay

Essay Prompt

Lewis argues throughout *The Screwtape Letters* that evil is often most successful not through dramatic wickedness, but through distraction, comfort, pride, self-deception, and spiritual laziness.

In a well-developed essay (5–7 pages), respond to the following:

Which method of temptation presented in the novel is the most dangerous to modern people, and why?

Your essay must:

- Develop a clear thesis
- Analyze at least 4 different letters
- Include direct quotations from the text
- Explain how Lewis develops his argument through satire and irony
- Address why seemingly “small” habits or attitudes become spiritually dangerous
- Include at least one connection to modern society, technology, politics, entertainment, education, or social media culture

**Important Restrictions**

To ensure original thought and close reading:

You MAY NOT:

- Use online summaries as your primary source
- Use AI-generated literary analysis
- Copy interpretations from websites or study guides
- Any use of AI will result in a zero

You MUST:

- Demonstrate familiarity with specific letters and passages
- Use quotations correctly
- Show original analysis and reflection

Any essay that relies heavily on generic plot summary or obvious online commentary will receive significant grade deductions.

Formatting Requirements

- Typed
- Double-spaced
- Times New Roman, 12 pt font
- MLA format
- Proper heading and page numbers
- Works Cited page required

## **Final Reflection (Required Add-On)**

At the end of your essay, include a **one-page personal reflection** answering:

Why do you think Lewis chose demons—not angels, priests, or saints—as the narrators of this book?

This portion will be graded primarily on thoughtfulness and sincerity.

## **Due Date**

The completed Reading Journal and Essay are due on Monday, August 10th.

Please come prepared to discuss the novel in depth during the first week of class.