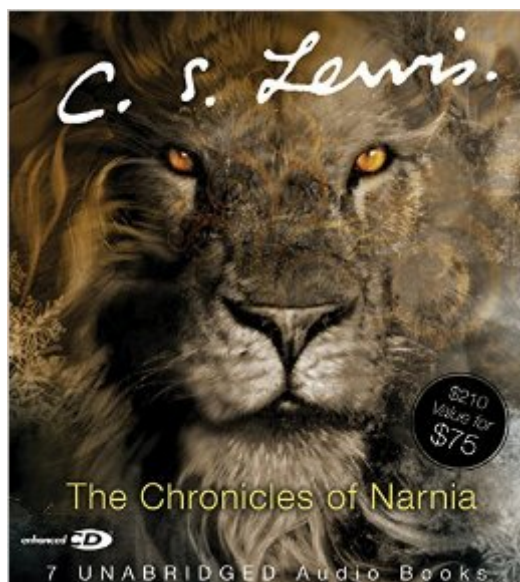


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Customer Reviews

The order in which the Narnia Chronicles should be read and published is a matter of great controversy. In my view, the answer to this question lies in a proper understanding of the deeper level of Narnia. When read on an adult level, the Narnia Chronicles function as a powerful medium used by Lewis to impart powerful spiritual truths about Christianity and theology. But these spiritual truths are conveyed more by Biblical allusions than by rigid allegory. This also has implications for

the order of the volumes in this series. The publishers of this edition have elected to follow the chronological order of the series: 1. The Magician's Nephew; 2. The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe; 3. The Horse and His Boy; 4. Prince Caspian; 5. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader; 6. The Silver Chair; 7. The Last Battle. The chronological order makes the books more strictly allegorical than they really were intended to be, and gives the impression that they are an extended allegory rather than incidental allusions, an incorrect impression in my view. Despite all the talk about allegory, it seems to me that Lewis is more fond of incorporating Biblical allusions where and when he pleases, rather than working with a strict and rigid allegory that tightly binds the plot. Certainly the central Biblical themes of creation, fall, redemption and consummation are present, and form the broad chronological coat-hanger on which the series rests. But ultimately Lewis does not want us to become obsessed with chronology, but with content. Thus there is something to the vehemence with which so many readers argue that the books must be read in the order in which they were first published, namely: 1. The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe; 2. Prince Caspian; 3. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader; 4. The Silver Chair; 5.

What can I add to the discussion of the Narnia books themselves? They're fantastic, and, as a long-time reader of Lewis's work, all I can say is that it's heartening to see that new generations are continuing to discover how wonderful the Chronicles of Narnia are, just as I did about 20 years ago. It's also great to see how many adults continue to treasure them, just as I do today. The only thing I would say to first-time readers is the same thing that a lot of other reviewers are saying: DON'T READ THE BOOKS IN THE ORDER THAT U.S. PUBLISHERS ARE PUTTING THEM OUT THESE DAYS! Lewis always intended the Narnia books to be published and read in the order in which he wrote them: LWW, PC, VDT, SC, HHB, MN, and LB. It's true that, near the end of his life, Lewis pondered the notion of having the books published and read in chronological order -- but only after an extensive set of internal revisions. As it turned out, Lewis never had the chance to complete those revisions. So, as they stand now, the books really should be read in the original sequence. For one thing, that's the only way for new readers to discover Narnia in the way that Lewis himself discovered it. Since Lewis never got around to his intended rewriting, the overall story unfolds much more meaningfully -- and much more dramatically -- when it's read OUT of order. For instance, part of the enjoyment of reading The Magician's Nephew is realizing just how a land that the reader has already fallen in love with actually came into being; there's an almost archaeological ("oh, NOW I understand") feel to it. If you read MN first, you miss completely that very important -- and very rich -- subtext.

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