

SHAW 20 FESTIVAL 25

The study guide for
The Shaw Festival's 2025 production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

Co-adapted by Selma Dimitrijevic and Tim Carroll and based on the novel "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" by C.S. Lewis

Directed by Selma Dimitrijevic

Costumes designed by Judith Bowden

Lighting designed by Kevin Lamotte

Scenic Consultant from James Lavoie

Original music and Music Director Music Director, original music and sound design by Ryan deSouza

Puppetry designed by Brendan McMurtry-Howlett

Illusions designed by Kelly Wong

Choreography by Genny Sermonia

Digital Learning Resource Study Guide

Written, voiced and edited by Kelly Wong

Produced by the Shaw Festival Community Engagement & Outreach Department

Production Sponsor **Ron & Barbara Besse**

Children and Family Programming Supporter **Christopher & Jeanne Jennings**

Education programming is supported by **The Martin Family**

Part 1 - Plot Synopsis

What if a simple wooden wardrobe could lead you to a land where animals talk, magic is real, and an epic battle between good and evil is about to unfold?

Welcome to the enchanting world of "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe."

Amidst the chaos of wartime London, four siblings—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy—are evacuated to the countryside, leaving their home and family behind for safety.

They arrive at a grand, mysterious country house, surrounded by quiet fields and filled with endless halls and hidden rooms waiting to be discovered.

Our adventure begins when Lucy, the youngest, discovers a wardrobe tucked away in a forgotten room. Pushing through rows of fur coats, she steps into Narnia—a glittering, snow-covered realm trapped in eternal winter.

In this magical land, Lucy meets Mr. Tumnus, a kind-hearted faun with the legs of a goat, the torso of a human and the warmth of a friend. He nervously reveals that Narnia is under the icy grip of the White Witch, a cruel sorceress who

rules through fear and oppression. Despite orders to betray Lucy, Mr. Tumnus chooses to help her return home—a brave act that puts him in grave danger.

When Edmund follows Lucy into the wardrobe, he has a very different encounter. Lured by the White Witch with enchanted Turkish Delight and promises of power, Edmund is tempted by her deceptive kindness. Will he realize the peril he's in before it's too late?

Soon, all four siblings make their way through the wardrobe and into Narnia, a dazzling, snow-covered world filled with magic, mystery, and challenges they could never have imagined. They meet the hospitable Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, who welcome the children into their snug, cozy den and offer them guidance in this strange, magical land. They share an ancient prophecy: four humans are destined to join forces with Aslan, the great lion, to defeat the Witch and bring peace back to Narnia.

As the Witch's forces close in, the Beavers guide the children on a perilous journey to find Aslan. The Witch's minions—wolves, trolls, and other dark creatures—are ruthless and terrifying, leaving destruction and fear wherever they go. But Edmund, swayed by the Witch's lies, secretly slips away to betray his siblings—forcing the others to act swiftly to evade the Witch's grasp.

The siblings finally meet Aslan, a majestic lion whose presence exudes both power and compassion. Aslan is no ordinary ruler; he embodies hope, justice, and the deeper magic woven into the very fabric of Narnia.

United under Aslan's banner, the children prepare for the challenges ahead. Sacrifices are made, alliances are tested, and the fate of Narnia hangs in the balance.

The battle between Aslan's forces and the Witch's minions becomes a true test of courage, loyalty, and redemption.

Will the White Witch's icy reign over Narnia finally be broken? Can the siblings rise to fulfill the ancient prophecy and restore balance to this magical land?

Step through the wardrobe and join us on this unforgettable journey to find out.

Part 2 - CS Lewis

Clive Staples Lewis, better known as C.S. Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast, Ireland. A brilliant scholar, he taught at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities. But beyond academia, Lewis had a vivid imagination and a passion for storytelling.

Lewis wanted to create stories that combined adventure, magic and moral lessons. He believed that through fantasy, readers could explore complex ideas in a relatable way. His deep interest in mythology and fairy tales deeply influenced his writing, and his friendship with fellow author J.R.R. Tolkien significantly shaped his work.

Published in 1950, "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" was the first book in what would become "The Chronicles of Narnia," a series of seven novels.

The idea began during World War II when children were evacuated from London to the countryside to escape bombings. Lewis took several children into his country home, inspiring the characters of Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy.

Across the series, Lewis explores themes of bravery, friendship, betrayal and redemption. Each book offers new adventures, while reinforcing the importance of making the right choices.

Over the years, many have brought "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" to life.

In 1988, the BBC brought Narnia to the small screen, enchanting viewers with a faithful adaptation that emphasized practical effects and heartfelt performances.

In 2005, a major motion picture adaptation was released, combining live-action and CGI to create a visually stunning representation of the story.

And for decades, theatres around the world have adapted the story, each with their own unique take on the timeless tale.

Now, it's the Shaw Festival's turn to invite you into Narnia.

For this brand new adaptation, artistic director Tim Carroll and director Selma Dimitrijevic bring a fresh perspective to the story while staying true to the heart of Lewis's vision. In our production, you'll see an immersive set that transforms the stage into the magical world of Narnia. From the icy designs of the Witch's costumes to the earthy attire of Aslan's followers, every costume piece is thoughtfully crafted to bring you into the story. We've incorporated new music composed specifically for this production, puppetry to bring the magical creatures to life, and illusions that will leave you asking "how did they do that?"

Our actors delve deep into their characters, exploring their hopes, fear and triumphs. You will witness Edmund's journey from temptation to redemption, and Lucy's unwavering belief in the impossible.

Speaking of the impossible...

Part 3 - Religion and Magic

In Narnia, magic is everywhere. It enchants the snowy forests, animates mythical creatures, and infuses the White Witch's every action. For C.S. Lewis, who held a strong Christian worldview, magic served as a way to explore profound moral and spiritual concepts. To some, Aslan represents a saint-like figure—offering sacrifice, forgiveness, and renewal. Yet even without a religious perspective, these moments can resonate on a human level. They remind us that loyalty, courage, and compassion are universal values, regardless of faith. Magic, in this sense, becomes a language of possibility, hope, and transformation that anyone can appreciate.

Onstage, we create our own kind of magic, rooted in centuries of theatrical tradition. Since the earliest days of drama, stage artists have used illusions to enchant audiences—employing hidden wires, clever lighting and ingenious set pieces to make the impossible possible, right before our eyes.

In our production, illusions are carefully woven into Narnia's world. Notice that such wonders don't occur in everyday London life. Why might that be? Perhaps it's to suggest that in our ordinary world, miracles are subtle—moments of goodness and empathy might go unnoticed. But in Narnia, where symbols and spiritual truths take on visible form, the extraordinary bursts forth in ways that no one can deny.

"The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" isn't just a story—it's a lesson about standing up for what's right, the power of forgiveness, and the importance of hope in the face of darkness.

Step on through the wardrobe, and see what awaits you on the other side.