

**AND
THERE ARE
STRANGE, EXCITING
HINTS IN THE BIBLE THAT
WHEN WE ARE DRAWN IN, A
GREAT MANY OTHER THINGS
IN NATURE WILL BEGIN TO
COME RIGHT. THE BAD
DREAM WILL BE
OVER: IT WILL BE
MORNING.
—C. S. Lewis**

***Mere
Christianity***

Unit 1—Lesson 1

C. S. Lewis

INTRODUCTION

C. S. Lewis's life was composed almost entirely of "writing and reading and domestic chores." And yet, in addition to his job as a Fellow at Oxford (which involved lecturing, private tutoring sessions, and pursuing his own courses of study), Lewis wrote and had published thirty-nine books on a wide range of topics: poetry, apologetics, scholarly work, essays, science fiction, lectures, fiction, and criticism. Another eighteen books were printed after his death, in addition to collections of his letters and a whole slew of biographies, memoirs, books of photography, articles, and commentaries. Today, more than forty years after his death, he is perhaps the best-known Christian writer in the world.

Lewis was born on November 29, 1898, in Dublin, Ireland, and christened Clive Staples Lewis, though he went by Jack. He and his brother Warnie grew up in a house full of books and spent their early childhoods happily reading, writing, drawing, and playing. When Lewis was nine and Warnie thirteen, their mother died of cancer, turning Lewis's world upside down. Two weeks later, he was sent away to school for the first time. The school—Wynward—was a horrible place. The quality of education was poor, and the headmaster beat the children frequently, often for no reason. The school closed after Lewis had been there for two years. Over the course of the next few years, he attended three other schools, until, at fifteen, his father sent him to live with a tutor, William Kirkpatrick. It was from Kirkpatrick that Lewis learned to read Greek, Latin, French, German, and Italian, and to argue—a knowledge that would stand him in good stead later in life, as a writer and as an apologist.

What we have been told is how we can be drawn into Christ—can become part of that wonderful present which the young Prince of the universe wants to offer his Father—that present which is Himself and therefore us in Him. It is the only thing we were made for . . . —C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

After two years with Kirkpatrick, Lewis took and passed the entrance examination for Oxford, where he was one of twelve men during his first term. The college was deserted because the First World War was in full swing, and at the end of that first term, Lewis too went away to the war. He was wounded by shrapnel from a shell, badly enough to be sent home, but not too badly, and after a convalescence, went back to Oxford, where he picked where he had left off—with one major difference.

Before they left for the war, Lewis and his roommate, Paddy Moore, had promised each other that if either of them survived the war, that one would look after the other's parent. Paddy Moore did not come back to England, so Lewis was left to look after Mrs. Moore and her daughter, Maureen. He helped them with the rent for a house near Oxford, which was no easy undertaking on a student's allowance, and visited them each afternoon. Despite his extra responsibilities, Lewis did well in his examinations at Oxford, taking a First in Latin and Greek Literature, a First in Ancient History and Philosophy, the Chancellor's English Essay Prize, and finally a First in English. After a few dead-end tries at getting a job, he was offered and accepted a temporary job as a philosophy teacher. The next year, he was elected a Fellow of Oxford's Magdalen (pronounced "Maudlin") College.

After that, much of the rest of his life took on a predictable rhythm of lectures and tutoring sessions and helping Mrs. Moore. After Lewis and Warnie's father died in 1929, they were able to use the proceeds from the sale of their childhood home to purchase a house near Oxford—called The Kilns—where they lived with Mrs. Moore and Maureen.

All this time, Lewis—who was raised as a protestant Christian, but who had become an atheist during his school years—was moving closer to Christianity. His re-conversion was not a one-step process, but a gradual thing. Not long after his father's death, he became a Theist—believing in a God, but not in the tenets of Christianity. Two years later, in 1931, he became a professing Christian, and eventually joined the Episcopal church.

Mrs. Moore died in 1951, leaving Lewis and Warnie alone at The Kilns. By this time, Lewis was quite well-known as a writer, and many people wrote to him. He always wrote back personally, devoting a chunk of every afternoon to answering his voluminous correspondence. In 1952, one of his letter-writers—an American woman named Joy Gresham—showed up for a visit. The next year, after her husband divorced her in order to marry her cousin, Joy came back to England to stay, bringing her sons with her. Lewis—now occupying the Chair of English at Cambridge's Magdalene College—helped them find a place to live, and helped Joy find schools for the boys. When the British government refused to grant Joy a permit allowing her to stay in England, Lewis married her in a civil ceremony, thereby getting her British citizenship. Since the Episcopal church didn't allow divorced people to remarry, he explained that the marriage was purely form, contracted so that Joy and the boys could stay in England. At some point in time, though, their relationship ceased to be platonic, and when Joy was diagnosed with cancer later that year, Lewis was able to find a pastor who would marry them

in a religious ceremony (arguing that, since Joy’s ex-husband had been a divorcee when she married him, her marriage to him had never been valid in the eyes of the church). In 1959, after two years of remission, Joy’s cancer returned, and she died the next year. Lewis’s own health was deteriorating—he had osteoporosis, a weak heart, and he had to be fitted with a catheter, which caused an entirely new set of problems—and he died three years after Joy, on November 22, 1963.

THE SELECTION

You’ll be reading *The Four Loves*, which was written in 1959, toward the end of Lewis’s life. The content of the book, which covers affection, friendship, eros, and charity, originally appeared as a series of ten radio talks by Lewis, created at the behest of the Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation in Georgia, and aired in America. There is a tape-recording available of Lewis reading the book aloud, and if you can get ahold of a copy, it’s fun to hear it read in Lewis’s rich voice.

WHILE YOU READ

As you read the book, pay attention to its organizational structure. It’s fairly obvious from the title that the book is broken down into four main parts—one for each of the four loves. But every piece of writing ought to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Keep your eyes open and see if you can identify the beginning, middle, and end of each chapter as it goes by. You might find it useful to read with a pencil in hand, so you can make notes in the margin for future reference.



LESSON PREVIEW

**The lesson
for this
book is on
writing a
five-
paragraph
essay,
its form,
and the
reasons
for it.**

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

1. What is the first distinction Lewis makes between different kinds of love?
2. What three reasons does Lewis give to show that Need-love really is love?
3. What two types of nearness to God does Lewis distinguish between?
4. Why does Lewis say that seeing the distinction between the two kinds of nearness to God is important?

CHAPTER 2

1. Into what two classes does Lewis divide pleasure?
2. Lewis says that “Need-pleasure is the state in which Appreciative pleasures end up _____.” Fill in the blank.
3. Lewis says that, while the desire for Need-pleasures fades once it’s been satisfied, we feel _____ about the objects of Appreciative pleasures. Fill in the blank.
4. Lewis says that he sees a deficiency in the previous classification of love into Gift-loves and Need-loves. What third distinction does he add?
5. What two forms of love for what is not personal does Lewis give special treatment?

CHAPTER 3

1. What does Lewis say Affection requires of its object?
2. What does Lewis say the kiss signifies?
3. Lewis says that Affection is not primarily an Appreciative Love, and he adds that this very fact has another effect. What is that effect?
4. What does Lewis say is dangerous about Affection?
5. What two kinds of Affection does Lewis differentiate between?
6. Lewis discusses two sub-topics under the heading of Need-love gone wrong. What are they?
7. Lewis mentions three people in his anecdotal examples of Gift-love gone wrong. What are their names?
8. What does Lewis say will happen if we try to live by Affection alone?

Unit 1—Lesson 1: C. S. Lewis

CHAPTER 4

1. Why does Lewis say Friendship is so little discussed?
2. Why does he say two is not the best number for friendship?
3. According to Lewis, how is Friendship different from Companionship?
4. Lewis says that, just because Friendship is spiritual, doesn't mean it's automatically good or positive. What three things does he say must be taken into account in regard to Friendship?

CHAPTER 5

1. Lewis distinguishes between Eros and Venus, or _____. Fill in the blank.
2. According to Lewis, Eros transforms Need-pleasure into what?
3. What does Lewis see as the real spiritual danger of Eros?
4. Lewis writes, "But Eros honoured without reservation and obeyed unconditionally becomes _____." Fill in the blank.
5. Of all the natural loves, Eros is the most what?

CHAPTER 6

1. What does Lewis say is "the burden"—the point—of the book?
2. What two reasons does Lewis give for his delay in addressing the idea of "natural loves as rivals to the love of God"?
3. Lewis rejects Augustine's reason for avoiding inordinate love of fellow-creatures. Why?
4. Lewis mentions two types of knowing God. What are they?
5. Lewis says that God can bestow a far better gift than the natural loves. What is it?
6. He also mentions two other gifts which God gives. What are they?
7. Lewis argues that Divine Love is not to be a substitute for natural loves. What does he say should happen instead?
8. a) Lewis says that he has included "two Graces" in his discussion of Charity. As you remember back over the chapter, what do you think those "two Graces" are?
b) At the end of Chapter 6, he mentions a third "Grace." What is it?

LITERARY LESSON: WRITING A FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY

Introduction

Whether you aspire to write the Great American Novel, fly for the Air Force, own a small business, or simply get good grades in school, you need to know how to communicate your thoughts clearly in writing—how to “begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end: then stop,” as Lewis Carroll’s *King of Hearts* says. That, essentially, is what the five-paragraph essay teaches you to do: organize your ideas and present them clearly and effectively in writing. I’m sure by now you’re remembering that *The Four Loves* is more than a hundred pages long, and thinking, “Five paragraphs?” But the organization of this book is essentially the same as that used in a basic essay, so it’s a good place to demonstrate the fundamentals of essay writing. Once they’ve mastered the five-paragraph essay, few people use it in its pure form—it limits your writing in many ways. But it’s important to be comfortable working within its confines because it’s the foundation upon which the rest of your writing life will be built, and the organizational skills it teaches are invaluable.

Writing a Thesis Statement

As with all writing, the first step in writing a five-paragraph essay is having an idea to write about. Whatever your other pre-writing processes are, you need to develop a thesis statement: a one-sentence statement of the main idea you’re trying to convey in your paper. A thesis statement can be simple, like this one for a short paper: “The primary causes of the Civil War were slavery, economic differences, and the issue of states’ rights.” Or it can be quite complex, like this one for a much longer paper: “The *Metamorphosis*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *The Counterfeiters* are all exemplary works of modernist fiction, and as such, they are useful in examining how modernist literature seeks to reconcile the irreconcilable values of realism and art through technical and stylistic forms.” A thesis statement boils down the main idea or argument of your paper into one sentence.

This is a great organizational aid, both for your audience and for you as a writer. In your finished paper, the thesis statement lets your readers know what you’re going to be talking about, and helps them keep your ideas organized in their minds as they read. As you’re writing, the thesis statement reminds you of what you’re supposed to be talking about. It helps you make sure that you don’t leave out anything important—that every facet of your argument is adequately supported in the body of the paper. And it helps ensure that you don’t include anything that shouldn’t be there—that you only talk about things which directly relate to your argument.

The first step in developing a thesis statement is to pick a broad topic for your paper. In many of your papers for school, this will have been done for you by the assignment—“Write a paper on *Macbeth*,” for example, sets you the broad topic of the play *Macbeth*. In others, the assignment will be more vague—“Write a comparison/contrast paper”—and you’ll have to think of a topic yourself. When that’s the case, the legwork and writing will be much more

enjoyable if you pick something you're interested in. Lewis's broad topic in this case is, of course, the four loves—Affection, Friendship, Eros, and Charity—a topic which he told H. I. Louttit, “seems to bring in nearly the whole of Christian ethics.” It was a topic he was specifically interested in, one he'd been wanting to address before he was requested to do the series of radio talks which eventually became the book *The Four Loves*.

The second step in developing a thesis statement is to narrow your focus by deciding what aspect or aspects of the broad topic interests you. *Macbeth* is too large a topic for one paper—whole books have been written about it. So you need to think of a specific aspect of the play—theme? tone? setting? characterization?—which interests you. For Lewis, who was writing an entire book, “Affection, Friendship, Eros, and Charity” was a narrow enough focus. Because your papers in high school will be much shorter, you'll need to continue to narrow your focus. “Tone in *Macbeth*,” for example, is still a huge topic, which would require many more than three body paragraphs to adequately address. So you need to narrow your focus still more, by thinking of several facets of tone that interest you—What is the tone? How is that tone created? Are there different tones in different parts of the play?—and, again, deciding on one.

For many papers, this second narrowing would be enough. For a five-paragraph essay, you'll need to narrow your focus yet again. If you're interested in the ways tone is created in *Macbeth*, you'll need to look at all of the ways tone is created (eg., darkness, blood, the supernatural, and the hurried pace of action,) and choose one to examine more closely. It's important that your thesis be specific enough, or your paper will tend to be vague and poorly supported. Choosing a very specific aspect of *Macbeth*, (the use of blood to create tone, for example) will enable you to fully support your argument in the three body paragraphs you'll have to devote to it.

Finally, decide what you're going to argue about your specific topic, and write your thesis statement. A really good thesis statement won't just be a statement of fact—“There's a lot of blood in *Macbeth*”—because there's nothing to argue for or explain. It's obvious to the casual reader that *Macbeth* is bathed in blood, so, though no one is likely to argue with you, that thesis wouldn't make a very interesting paper. “Blood—in its quantity, its visibility, and its permanence—is central to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and key in creating the eerie, nightmarish tone of the play,” makes a much better thesis statement. It makes a positive, arguable statement, and it includes three specific examples to support that statement, paving the way for the body paragraphs to follow.

While it's important to develop a thesis sentence before you begin writing, you're not stuck with it permanently if you decide at some point further down the road that you don't like it. It's an important guide, helping you formulate and clarify your thoughts, but you may find as you start writing that the support you have really backs up a different argument better, or you may change your opinion in the course of hammering your arguments out on paper. If that happens, it's fine to change your thesis sentence. Just make sure you always have one, to keep your paper organized and coherent.

And keep in mind that once you get the hang of it, you won't need to narrow your focus exactly three times before you come up with a thesis sentence for every paper you write. Sometimes you'll just know exactly what you want to write about, and you'll skip straight to formulating a thesis sentence. Sometimes you'll realize up front that you want to write about theme in *Macbeth*, and skip straight to step three. You'll frequently move beyond writing the five-paragraph essay in its pure form to write more complex papers which, even if you start at step one, may only need one or two narrowings rather than three or four, because they're about more than one idea. Or you'll have such a big idea—you want to define morality, perhaps, or the nature of truth—that producing a coherent thesis sentence might take seven or eight narrowings. The step-by-step process I outlined above is to your mind what training wheels were to your muscles when you were learning to ride a bike: It helps you develop a focused thesis statement while your mind gets used to the discipline of writing, like training wheels kept you from falling over while your muscles got used to balancing.

Building an Introductory Paragraph

The five-paragraph essay, as its name implies, consists of five paragraphs: an introductory paragraph, three paragraphs which make up the body of the paper, and a concluding paragraph. Once you've written your thesis sentence, you're ready to build your introductory paragraph. The purpose of this first paragraph is to provide a foundation, so to speak, for the next four paragraphs—to give the background information necessary to help your readers understand the rest of your paper. There are two parts to an introductory paragraph: introducing the broad subject of your paper—whether it's love, or *Macbeth*, or the colonies of Chesapeake and Virginia—and introducing the specific aspects of that subject which you'll examine in more detail in the body of the paper. As I mentioned before, the specific aspects of your subject will usually be included in your thesis sentence.

In a five-paragraph essay, you'll only have space to cover one idea, so you'll only need one introduction. Because Lewis discusses several ideas, he has several introductions: He introduces the broad subject of his book—love—in a detailed way in the first chapter of the book. And he does it in a smaller way at the beginning of each chapter.

Lewis's introduction is an attempt at defining and comparing what he sees as the two basic types of love. In the first paragraph of his introduction, he first talks about love, in general: "God is love," says St. John. When I first tried to write this book I thought that his maxim would provide me with a very plain highroad through the whole subject." Then he moves on to introduce the two specific ideas which the rest of the chapter deals with: "The first distinction I made was therefore between what I called *Gift-love* and *Need-love*" (emphasis added).

Likewise, in the first paragraph of his second chapter, Lewis first introduces the broad subject: the differences and connections between "like" and "love." Then he tells us that we're going to discuss liking, and specifically pleasure, first, before moving on to loves for the sub-human. "Since 'the highest does not stand without the lowest' we had better begin at the bottom, with

mere likings; and since to ‘like’ anything means to take some sort of pleasure in it, we must begin with pleasure.” In the body of the chapter, Lewis proceeds to do exactly that, discussing first pleasure, then liking, then love for nature and for country.

Here’s another example, this time of a very simple introductory paragraph for a five-paragraph essay:

Chesapeake and New England began in much the same way. Both were settled by people from England. Both were started at about the same time. Yet they ended up as two distinctly different colonies. Several things contributed to these differences: The kinds of people who came to America, the motives they had for coming, and the geography and climates of the regions in which they settled are the three most important.

The first sentence introduces you to the subject of the paper: the colonies of Chesapeake and New England. The next two sentences give you a little bit of background information. And the last sentence—the thesis sentence—states the idea that the rest of the paper will try to prove: The settlers, their motives for settling, and the regions they settled are the three most important reasons that the two colonies turned out so differently.

As much as possible, you should begin your paper in a fresh, intriguing way. Lewis begins his chapters with a variety of openings: a quote from the gospel of John, a joke about a William Morris poem, a vivid picture of the sounds, smells, and feeling of a basketful of puppies, and so on. He does not say at the beginning of each chapter, “Now I am going to talk about Affection . . . Now I am going to talk about Friendship . . . Now I am going to talk about Eros . . . Now I am going to talk about Charity.” Neither should you. It’s weak writing to tell the reader, “I’ve decided to focus on the character quality of persistence,” or “This paper will compare and contrast *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*,” or “I’m going to write about the three ways blood affects the tone of *Macbeth*.” A favorite saying of fiction-writing teachers is “Show, don’t tell,” and that goes for essay-writing as well. Instead of telling your readers flatly what they’re about to read, be imaginative. Try to introduce your subject with an anecdote, a joke, a startling visual image, an appeal to one of the senses other than sight, a connected current event—something that catches your reader’s eye and makes him or her want to read further.

A good introductory paragraph for that paper on blood and tone in *Macbeth* might be:

Bleeding heavily, a soldier stumbles into view, gasping out news of a violent battle. This scene from the beginning of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* effectively sets the stage for the action to come. Blood is one of the most remarkable features of *Macbeth*. It flows in rivers across the stage, fills oceans, and covers the characters. Unlike *Richard III*, where the numerous killings all happen off stage, the murders in *Macbeth* happen on stage in full view of the

audience (Kott 86)¹. Blood—in its quantity, its visibility, and its permanence—is central to *Macbeth* and key in creating the eerie, nightmarish tone of the play.

This paragraph opens with a vivid picture which catches the reader’s eye and illustrates the point I’m about to make, all at the same time, and its fourth sentence continues that vivid imagery. It still manages to convey the key information—this paper is about *Macbeth*, and specifically about the way the quantity, visibility, and permanence of blood affects the tone of *Macbeth*—but it does it in an intriguing, exciting way.

Don’t worry if you can’t always think of an exotic way to begin your papers. As with anything else in life, it will get easier with practice—but it’s also true that some topics just don’t lend themselves to an exciting beginning. Just present the most enjoyable introduction you’re able to for each paper, and keep writing.

Writing the Body

Your introduction, containing a thesis statement with three main subheadings or examples, paves the way for the body of your paper. It lays out for you quite neatly how the rest of the paper should be organized. The three specific topics mentioned in your thesis sentence are the topics of your three body paragraphs, so your body paragraphs should appear in the order in which they’re listed in the introduction. This means that you should list your three specific topics in the introduction in the same order in which you want to discuss them in the body of the paper.

Lewis follows this pattern throughout *The Four Loves*. In the first paragraph of his introduction, for example, he mentions first Gift-love, then Need-love. And when he starts to discuss those ideas in detail in the following paragraphs, he tackles Gift-love first, then Need-love. In the same way, if my thesis sentence is “Blood—in its quantity, its visibility, and its permanence—is central to *Macbeth*,” my first body paragraph will deal with the quantity of blood in the play, my second body paragraph will discuss the visibility of blood, and my third body paragraph will cover the permanence of blood. If I phrased my thesis sentence “in its visibility, permanence, and quantity,” my first body paragraph would tackle visibility, my second permanence, and so on.

Unless a different order is clearly indicated by your subject—unless, for example, your points really need to be approached in chronological order—you’ll want to make sure you both begin and end on strong points, putting your weakest point in the middle. Make sure you begin and end on ground where you’ve got your best footing.

1. This is an in-text citation, letting the reader now that this idea originally came from another writer: Kott is the author’s last name; 86 is the page number on which it appeared)

In Conclusion

Once you've finished writing the body, you're done, right? Well, not quite. If you stop there, the end of your paper will feel like it's just stopped, rather than feeling like it's finished. You still need a conclusion—a final paragraph that summarizes and emphasizes the main ideas of your paper. Your conclusion should include a restatement of your thesis statement, as a reminder to your readers of what you've just spent three paragraphs showing them.

The conclusion is not the place to introduce new ideas. Lewis's conclusion deals with Charity, which sounds like a new topic until you remember that he's spent the book pointing out that "the natural loves are not self-sufficient." The final chapter—his conclusion—is simply an emphasis and a restatement of the idea that something else (Charity) is needed to keep the natural loves as loves rather than as false gods. So it should be with your papers. It's fine to leave the reader with a parting idea to mull over (like Lewis does in his last paragraph, when he raises briefly the idea of Appreciative Love toward God but doesn't discuss it in detail) but don't bring up entirely new ideas—if they didn't fit in the body of the paper, they probably need to be saved and used in a different paper.

Here is a simple concluding paragraph for a five-paragraph essay on the colonies of Chesapeake and New England:

Chesapeake and New England started out much the same, populated by English citizens seeking a new life in a new world. But Chesapeake was settled primarily by bachelors, while New England was settled mostly by families. The Chesapeake colonists were intending to make their fortune quickly and return home to England; New England's settlers, for the most part, had burned their bridges behind them and came intending to stay in the New World, no matter what. Finally, the two groups of people settled in vastly different areas: Chesapeake had a mild climate and rockless soil, while New England was a cold and rocky coast, a much more difficult place to stick it out. Each of these factors made an important contribution to the distinctly different characters of the Chesapeake and New England regions of America.

This paragraph summarizes the entire paper. The first sentence reminds us that the colonies came from similar backgrounds, the next three sentences emphasize the specific reasons for the eventual differences between the colonies, and the final sentence reminds us of the thesis, or main argument, of the paper.

A five-paragraph essay can really be boiled down into three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Tell your readers what you're going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them: Keep this organizational premise in mind, write clearly and imaginatively, and, as much as it depends on you, choose topics that interest and excite you, and you'll be on your way to being able to communicate well in writing.

WRITING EXERCISE

1. Following the steps outlined in the lesson, write a five-paragraph essay on any subject you wish. Include, on a separate sheet of paper, a demonstration of your thesis-development process, identifying at least your broad topic, your specific topic, and your final thesis statement.

THE INKLINGS

Oxford University, in C. S. Lewis's day, was full of clubs. The Oyster Club met to celebrate the end of grading exams by eating oysters. The Cave was a group of Oxford tutors with similar ideas about reforms in the English School who took their name from the biblical story where David gathers his followers in the cave of Adullam. The Socratic Club existed to formally debate religious and philosophical ideas. And there were many others, varying greatly in originality of name, level of formality, and deliberateness of purpose.

Among the many clubs was a relatively informal group called the Inklings. Their name was borrowed by C. S. Lewis from a defunct undergraduate club. They kept no minutes or other formal record of their meetings, and the first mention of their existence is in a 1938 letter from J. R. R. Tolkein to a friend. They had no formal list of members or rules of membership, and the group was a fluid one, with a few principle attendees and many who came sporadically. The core of the group included C. S. Lewis and his brother Warnie, J. R. R. Tolkein and his son Christopher, R. E. Havard, Charles Williams, Hugo Dyson, and Owen Barfield, though not even all of these were present at every meeting. Those who could met each Thursday night in Lewis's rooms in Oxford to drink tea and beer, read aloud and criticize each other's work, and discuss literature and ideas. (Among other works, Tolkein's *Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and Lewis's *Screwtape Letters* and science-fiction trilogy were first read aloud and talked over at Thursday Inklings meetings.) The group also gathered on Tuesday mornings in a pub (usually the Eagle and Child, which they called "the Bird and Baby") to talk about everything under the sun.

In keeping with their general informality, the Inklings had no formal statement of purpose. They were simply a group of friends with similar interests, gathering to enjoy each other's company and conversation. To a great extent they existed because of C. S. Lewis. The core members of the group were all friends of his before they were friends with each other, they met primarily in his rooms, and he seems to have been the only member who was always present at their gatherings.

Beneath their obvious similarities—their friendship with Lewis and their interest in literature, among others—the Inklings differed in many areas. Most of the group's members were professing Christians—but Tolkein was a devout Catholic, Lewis was an Irish Protestant, Williams was interested in magic and the occult, and Barfield was an Anthroposophist. They all loved literature and language—but Tolkein wasn't particularly interested in anything beyond Anglo-Saxon, Warnie Lewis's particular interest was in

French history, Barfield was devoted almost entirely to Anthroposophist philosophy, C. S. Lewis read everything he could get his hands on but disapproved of the modernists, and Williams read and appreciated many modernist writers. Beside friendship with Lewis, the Inklings' common ground seems to have been their love of ideas. They liked to read and to think and talk about ideas, and they all thought the same questions important. They don't seem to have minded whether or not they were in perfect agreement about the answers to those questions.

The Inklings came into existence somewhere between 1933 and 1938, and met at least once a week for twenty-five years. They finally disbanded after Lewis's death in 1963.