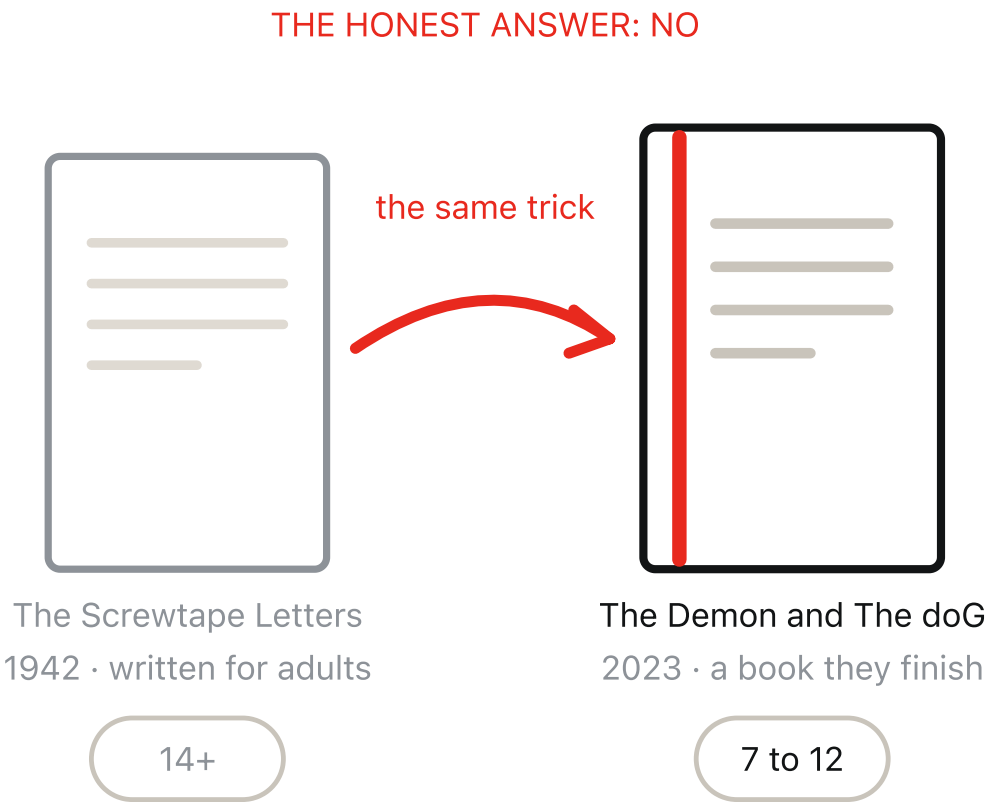
GUIDE

Is there a Screwtape Letters for kids?

The short answer is no: Screwtape was written for adults and most guides put it at 14 and over. Here is what to hand a nine year old instead.

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The short answer is no, and it is worth saying that plainly before offering anything else. The Screwtape Letters was written for adults, published in 1942, and almost every reading guide that puts an age on it says fourteen and over. There is no official simplified edition, no middle

grade adaptation, and no abridgement. What exists instead is a set of study guides aimed at teenagers, which are useful if you have a teenager and no use at all if you have a nine year old.

So the question keeps getting asked and keeps getting answered with the same shrug. That is a strange gap, because the thing people are actually asking for is not complicated.

What the question is really asking

Nobody asking this wants a shorter Screwtape. They want the specific trick that makes Screwtape work, in a book a child will actually finish.

The trick is the point of view. Lewis did not write a book explaining temptation. He wrote a book in which a senior demon gives career advice to a junior one, and left the reader to work out that everything the demon calls success is a disaster. The reader is never told what to think. The reader is put on the wrong side of the desk and allowed to notice.

That is the mechanism, and it is the reason Screwtape survives being assigned in classrooms. It does not preach, so a reader who has their guard up against preaching never raises it.

Why nobody has written the children's version

Two reasons, and both are honest ones.

The first is that the mechanism is hard to sustain. An unreliable narrator you are supposed to disagree with is a demanding thing to hold for a whole book, and it is much easier to write a story with a good child in it who learns a lesson. The market is full of the second kind.

The second is that the subject frightens publishers. A children's book narrated by a demon sounds, described in one line to somebody who has not read it, like exactly the sort of book a cautious parent would refuse. Writing it requires being willing to have that conversation.

What to hand a younger reader instead

The Demon and The doG is told from the demon's side. Damon works for the Demonic Defense, he is competent, he is busy, and he is entirely convinced he is the reasonable one. Then something makes contact with him and his working life stops making sense.

It is written for ages seven to twelve and runs to eighty three pages, which is the length a reluctant reader can see the end of from the beginning. The comparison to Screwtape is not ours. It is on Bryant Benitez's own listing, in his own words: for readers who enjoy the fun

lighthearted style of C.S. Lewis' Screwtape Letters.

The difference from Lewis is that this one is played for adventure and for jokes rather than for satire. A twelve year old is not being asked to hold an ironic reading in their head for two hundred pages. They are being asked to follow a demon who is having a very bad week.

If you were hoping for the real thing

If your reader is thirteen or fourteen and a strong reader, give them Screwtape itself. It is better than anything written in its shadow, including this recommendation, and a capable teenager will get more out of the original than out of a substitute chosen to be easier.

The books here are for the years before that, which is a real gap and not a consolation prize. A child who meets the from the other side idea at nine is a child who is ready for Lewis at fourteen.

This is one part of **faith fiction told from the other side**, the idea behind both books and the podcast.



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Books by Bryant Benitez, pastor and hospital chaplain. Faith-based adventures for younger readers, with the faith in the plumbing, not painted on the front.