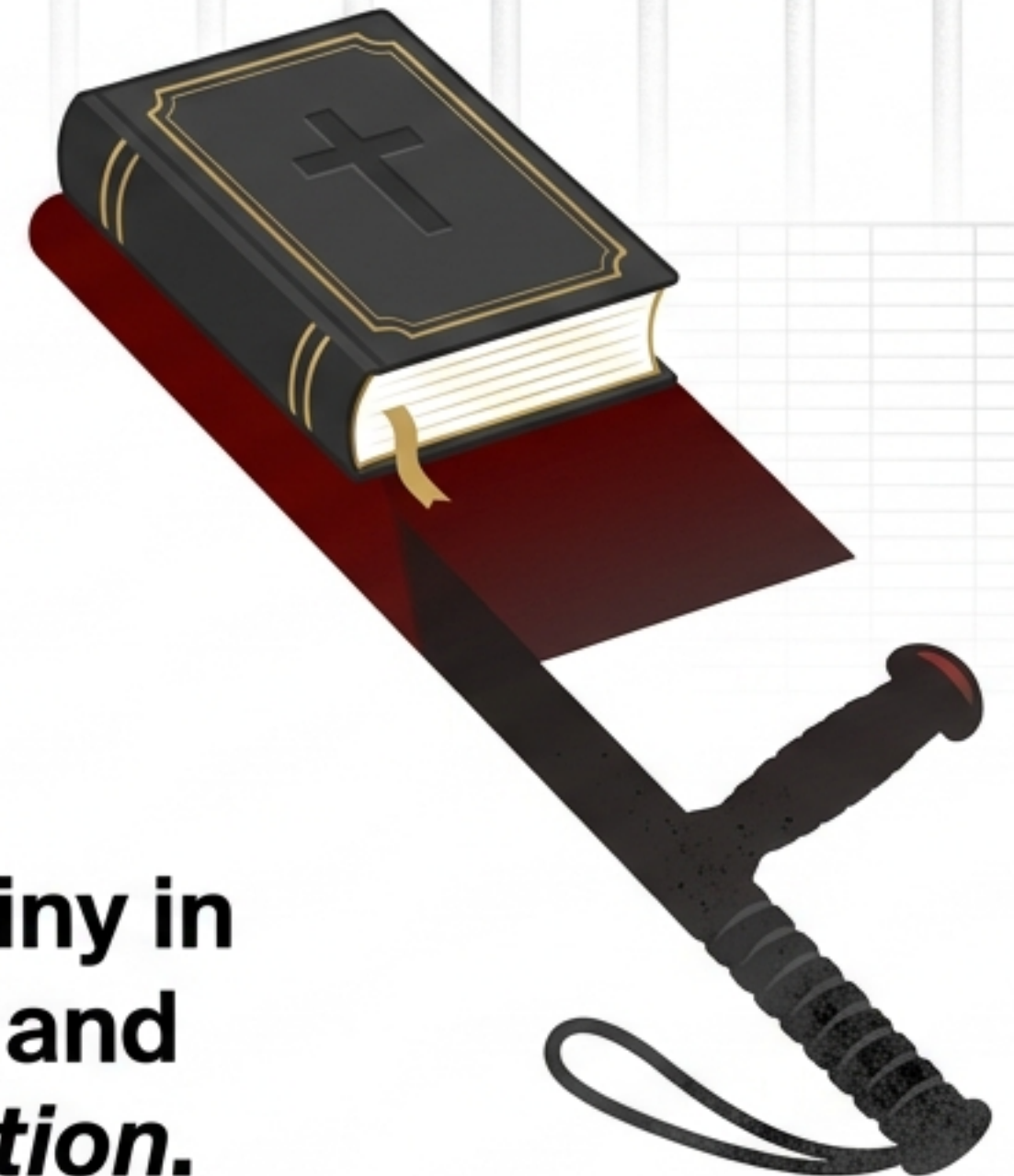


Leaving Cert  
Comparative Guide:  
Ordinary Level

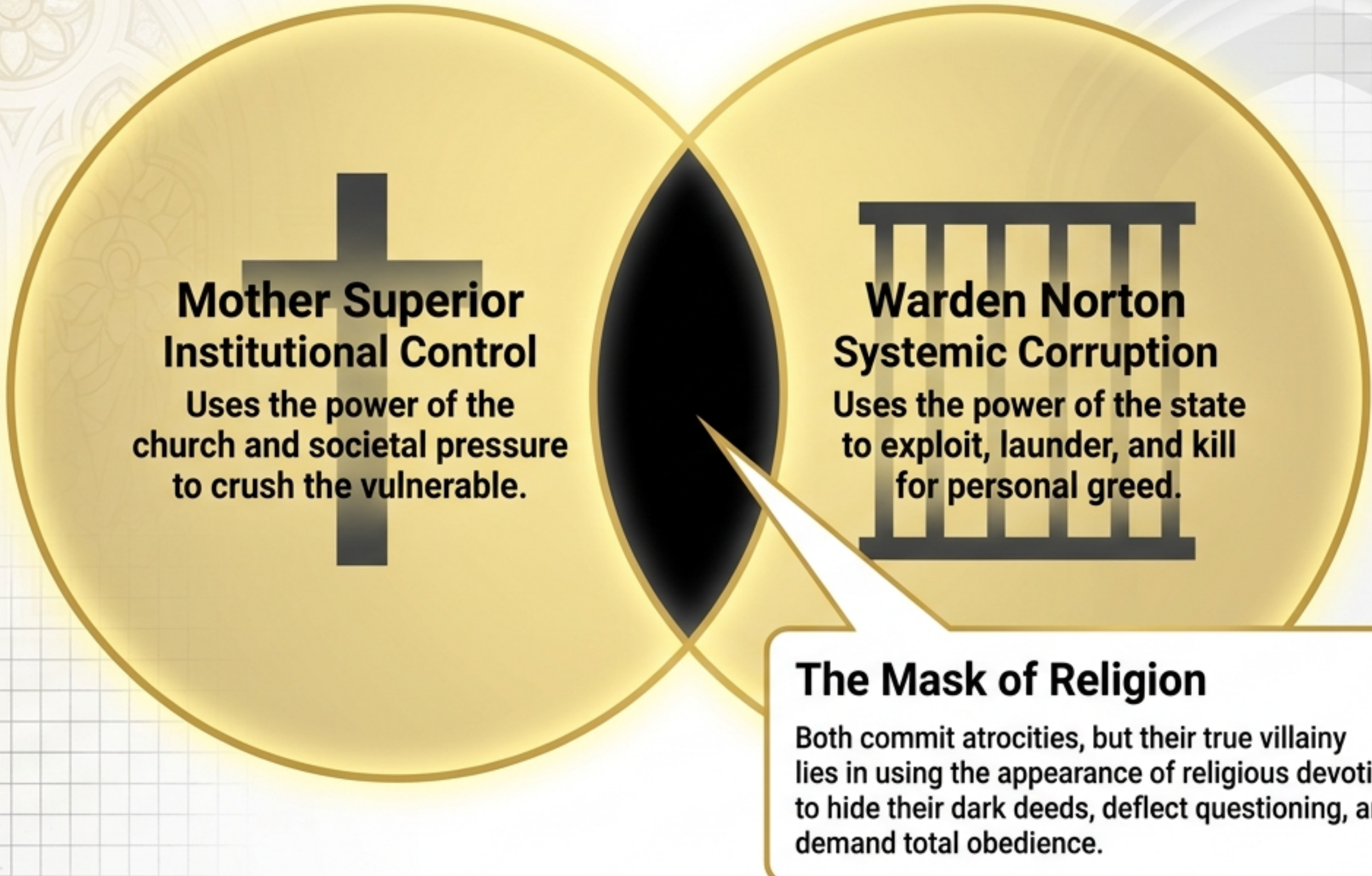


# Masks of Devotion

**Comparing Religious Villainy in  
*Small Things Like These* and  
*The Shawshank Redemption*.**



# The Architecture of a Villain



## Mother Superior Institutional Control

Uses the power of the church and societal pressure to crush the vulnerable.

## Warden Norton Systemic Corruption

Uses the power of the state to exploit, launder, and kill for personal greed.

### The Mask of Religion

Both commit atrocities, but their true villainy lies in using the appearance of religious devotion to hide their dark deeds, deflect questioning, and demand total obedience.

# Anatomy of a Villain: The Quiet Tyrant

## The Voice (Gaslighting)

Distorts reality. Tells Furlong the girl in the coal shed can't "tell night from day."

## The Mind (Strategic Threats)

Reminds Furlong she controls admissions to St. Margaret's—a veiled threat against his daughters' futures.

## The Hand (Bribery)

Pays for silence. Hands Furlong an envelope containing £50 after he discovers the truth.

## The Legacy (Systemic Cruelty)

Sanctions absurd cover stories (playing "Hide and Seek"), separates mothers from children, and drives young women to suicide.

# Anatomy of a Villain: The Corrupt Overseer

## **The Shield (Hypocrisy)**

**Uses his devout Christian persona as a shield while orchestrating mass money laundering and bribery.**

## **The Pocket (Greed)**

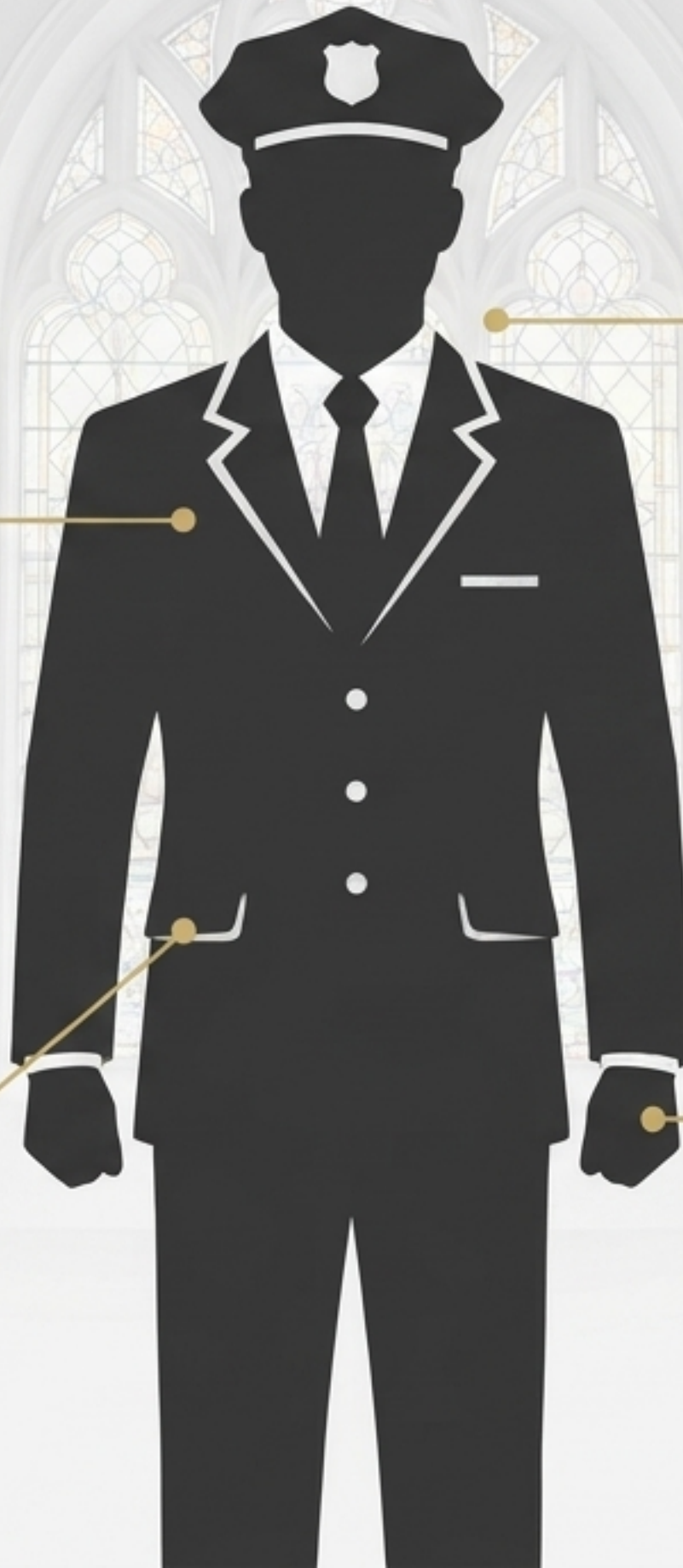
**Exploits forced inmate labor to win local contracts and extort huge illicit profits.**

## **The Executioner (Murder)**

**Has Tommy murdered in cold blood purely to keep Andy trapped as his personal accountant.**

## **The Fist (Brutality)**

**Maintains a regime of terror. Allows Captain Hadley to beat a new prisoner to death on Andy's first night with zero consequences.**



# The Comparative Matrix

Theme	Mother Superior	Warden Norton
The Public Mask	The charitable caregiver running a holy institution.	The devout, Bible-quoting Christian disciplinarian.
Reaction to Discovery	Subtle manipulation, £50 bribe, and threats to family.	Extreme violence, solitary confinement, and assassination.
Treatment of the Vulnerable	Punishes girls (Sarah), steals children, ignores despair.	Profiteers off inmates, sanctions deadly beatings.
The Ultimate Flaw	Arrogance blinded her to Furlong's quiet, moral defiance.	Greed and pride led to his complete exposure and suicide.

# Hiding in Plain Sight



**Religion is camouflage. Mother Superior uses the unquestioned authority of the Catholic Church to prevent the town from asking what happens behind her walls. Her cruelty is protected by divine authority.**



**Norton literally hides his illegal ledger of dirty money inside a wall safe concealed by a framed Bible verse: "Judgement cometh and that right soon." His piety is a physical shield for his greed.**

“How dare you question me?”

**True villains cannot tolerate any challenge to their authority.**



### The Tea Refusal

**Mother Superior insists Furlong come in for tea, overriding his three refusals. She expects total submission. When he notes he took his mother's name, she is insulted, realizing he cannot be easily swayed.**



### The Obtuse Remark

**When Andy presents actual evidence of his innocence and calls Norton 'obtuse', Norton erupts. He cannot handle an inmate challenging his intellect or control.**

# The Cover-Up Playbook

## Phase 1: The Threat (Discovery)

Furlong finds the young girl locked in the coal shed.

**Tommy reveals he knows the man who actually committed Andy's crime**

## Phase 2: The Facade (The Lie)

'We were looking for her, about to call the Gardaí.'

**Norton brings Tommy outside, pretending to listen to his story.**

## Phase 3: The Neutralization (The Silencing)

**Bribery & Blackmail.** Hands over £50 and threatens the school admission of Furlong's daughters.



**Murder.** Nods to the tower guard, having Tommy shot dead in cold blood.



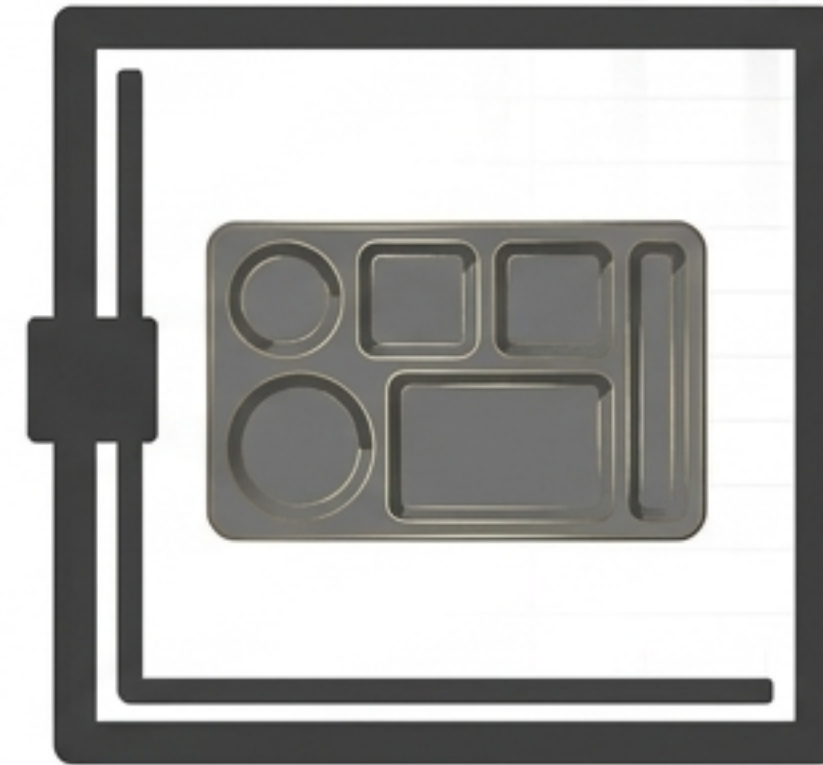
# The Weapon of Isolation

**Both villains maintain their empires by physically and mentally isolating those who threaten them or disobey.**



The Coal Shed

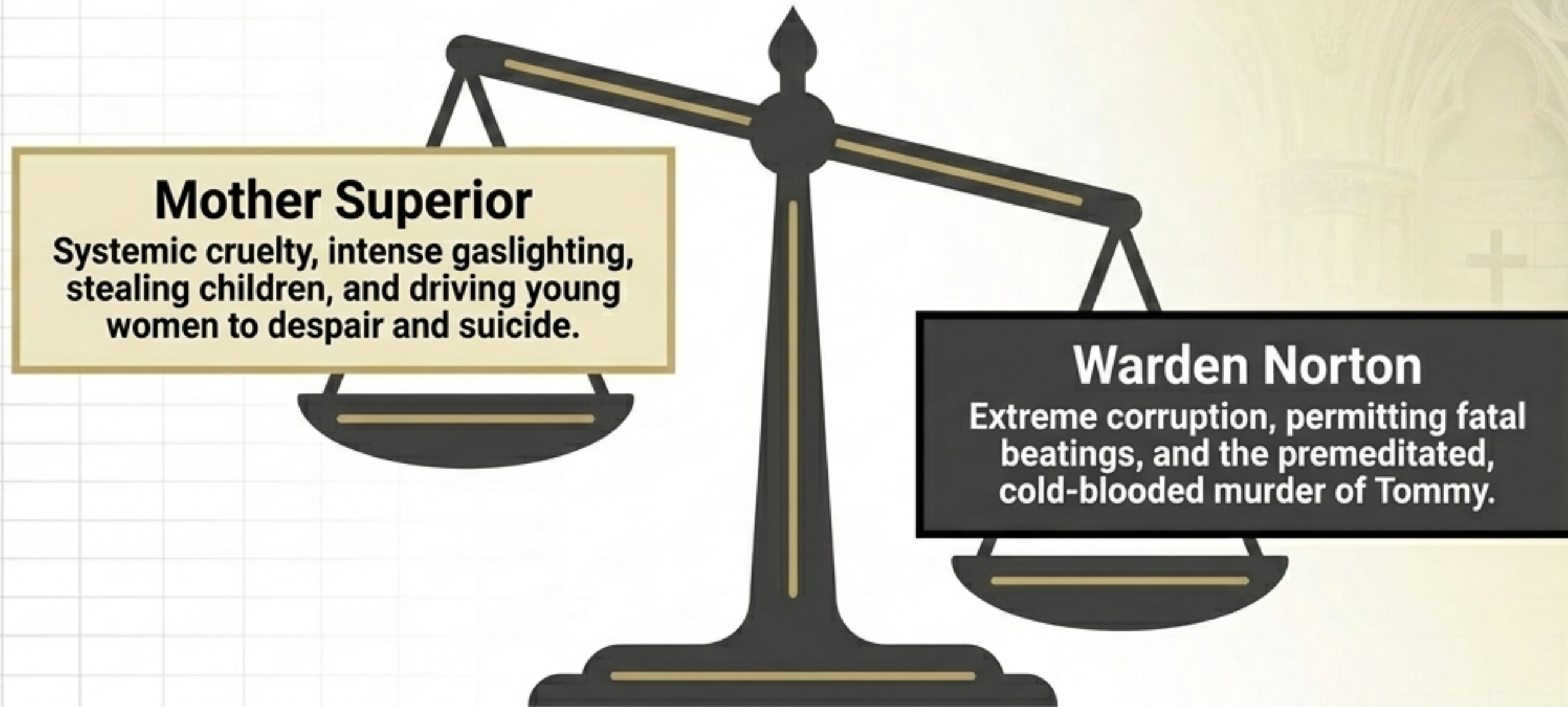
**Mother Superior locks girls in the freezing coal shed. She separates mothers from their children and socially isolates the convent from the town's conscience.**



The Hole

**Norton uses solitary confinement as a psychological weapon. He throws Andy in the hole specifically to break his spirit and force him to continue laundering money.**

# The Final Verdict: Who is Worse?



**The Verdict: While Mother Superior oversees terrifying systemic abuse, Warden Norton is ultimately the worse villain. He crosses the line from corrupt overseer into an active, cold-blooded murderer simply to protect his illegal wealth.**

# Facing the Music: The Aftermath



## The Coward's Exit

Norton proves to be a hypocrite to the very end. When finally exposed, he refuses to face justice for his crimes, choosing instead to take his own life.



## The Unknown

We do not see Mother Superior's immediate reaction to Bill rescuing Sarah. Her final fate remains unknown, making her villainy chillingly enduring—her corrupt empire is built to survive such cracks.

# Core Concepts for Your Essay



**The Shared Mask:** Both villains use a rigid, highly public display of Christianity to shield immense corruption, cruelty, and greed.



**Absolute Arrogance:** Both refuse to be questioned, demanding unquestioning obedience and reacting with extreme prejudice to any threat to their authority.



**Methods of Control:** Mother Superior relies on psychological manipulation, social threats, and bribes. Norton relies on physical violence, solitary confinement, and murder.



**The Final Verdict:** Norton's direct orchestration of Tommy's assassination marks the pinnacle of individual evil, making him the worse villain compared to Mother Superior's systemic, hidden abuse.