



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE BY SHIRLEY JACKSON

1. Most Gothic novels are written in an ornate style, but Jackson chooses a simplistic style with a conversational word choice. What does it add to this harrowing tale? Do you find that it detracts in some places?
2. What is it about Hill House that allows it to consume Eleanor's sanity so efficiently, or what is it about Eleanor that allows Hill House to consume her sanity?
3. Why does Dr. Montague choose Eleanor, Theodora, and Luke to stay in Hill House? What is the role of Mrs. Dudley? How does her behavior influence various characters?
4. The house itself seems to be speaking at some points, but the spirits in the house are never explicitly defined. How does this affect the reader's perception of events?
5. While The Haunting of Hill House is told in the third person, by an omniscient narrator, the point of view throughout the novel is almost exclusively Eleanor's. Is her viewpoint reliable?
6. Eleanor often tells herself that she deserves her newfound happiness at Hill House. What is the cause of this happiness? Is it real or an illusion? How do her feelings about both the house and its temporary inhabitants change over the course of her stay?
7. Do you believe Eleanor was justified in feeling resentful towards the others for treating her like a hysterical female, or do the others in the party observe something in Eleanor that alarms them?
8. Did Eleanor intentionally let her mother die, or is she merely suffering from bereavement and a mistaken feeling of guilt?
9. How does Jackson establish a romantic triangle, given the social proprieties of the era in which the novel is set? (It was first published in 1959.) What is the significance of the song refrain Eleanor keeps repeating, "journeys end in lovers meeting"?
10. There are some humorous moments and dialogue in the novel. What purpose do you think these comedic asides serve in this horror story?
11. Imagine that the events of Hill House took place in 2020. How would the story, themes, and characters change to become relevant for our world?

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