

THE GREAT DIVORCE by C. S. Lewis

Discussion Questions

- 1) In the preface, C. S. Lewis states, “I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road...Evil can be undone, but it cannot ‘develop’ into good. Time does not heal it.” Comment.
- 2) What was your image of Hell prior to reading C. S. Lewis’ book? Has your image changed? What do you think of the dreary town of Hell that Lewis created? Do you consider Hell to be more of a place or a choice?
- 3) As the narrator embarks on the bus, what sort of personalities does he meet? What is the general feeling of the other passengers about the trip they are about to take? What did the narrator mean when he discovered that the ‘Tousle-Headed Poet’ was an ill-used man?
- 4) What do you think of the idea that the inhabitants of Hell are gradually moving more and more distant from each other? One of the closest historical characters is Napoleon, whose house is now “just a little pin prick of light, with nothing near it for million of miles.” Comment.
- 5) When the inhabitants of Hell reach Heaven, they discover that they are ghosts, while the inhabitants of Heaven are solid and bright. They also discover that it is painful, at least at first, to walk on the solid grass. Why do you think Lewis used this imagery? Has your image of Heaven changed from reading this book?
- 6) Which one of the ghosts affected you the most and why? Here are some of them:
 - a) The ‘Big Man or Ghost’ who couldn’t believe Len, the murderer of Jack, was in Heaven?
 - b) Dick’s friend, the apostate ghost
 - c) The ghost who tried to steal an apple from Heaven
 - d) The Hard-Bitten ghost who thought Hell was a flop and saw conspiracies everywhere
 - e) The ghost who was ashamed to be seen
 - f) The talkative or grumbler ghost
 - g) The pitiful ghost who was still trying to be attractive
 - h) The artist ghost who still wants to be distinguished

- i) The nagging wife ghost who won't enter Heaven if her husband, Robert, is there
 - j) The mother ghost who wanted to see her son, Michael, more than God
 - k) The ghost with the Lizard which later turned into a great stallion
 - l) The Tragedian ghost attached to the Dwarf who resented the fact that his wife was happy in Heaven
- 7) The narrator runs into the "bright spirit" of George MacDonald. MacDonald says, "In the end, there are only two kinds of people: Those who say to God, 'Thy will be done.' And those to whom God says in the end, 'Thy will be done.'" The teacher also says, "Milton was right. The choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words, 'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.'" Comment.
- 8) What line from the book was your favorite?
- 9) There was a huge procession for the Lady Sarah Smith, in Heaven. What was remarkable about her earthly life? Who do you think will be exalted in Heaven? Who will be humbled? Will there be surprises?
- 10) How is the concept of time treated in the book? George MacDonald states, "Both good and evil, when they are fully grown, become restropective?" What does he mean?
- 11) The inhabitants of Hell go on an excursion to Heaven and are given the opportunity to remain. Do you think it is possible for someone to have a conversion after death?
- 12) What did you think of the ending?