

Discussion Guide

That Hideous Strength, chs 16–17



OPEN

They ought to have all looked more and more comfortable as [Wither] proceeded; and there ought soon to have been murmurs of grave regret for the tragedy which they had just witnessed. That was what Wither expected. What he actually saw bewildered him. The same too attentive silence which had prevailed during Jules' speech had returned. Brith unblinking eyes and open mouths greeted him in every direction. The woman began to laugh again—or no, this time it was two women. Cosser, after one frightened glance, jumped up, overturning his chair, and bolted from the room. The Deputy Director could not understand this, for to him his own voice seemed to be uttering the speech he had resolved to make. But the audience heard him saying, “Tidies and fogleman—I sheel foor that we all—er—most steeply rebut the defensible, though, I trust, lavatory, Aspasia which gleams to have selected our redeemed inspector this deceiving. It would—ah—be shark, from anyone's debenture . . .”

- Ch 16, p. 343



ENTRY

1. How does the descent into babble and chaos seem like a fitting end to the misuse of language we have observed in Wither throughout the novel?



RECALL

1. How does the banquet at Belbury come to a tragic and violent end? What about the ends of Filostrato, Straik, Wither, Frost, and Feverstone?
2. What happens at the contrasting banquet at St Anne's? What is to be the end of Ransom and of the company who have gathered around him?
3. What is the result of the contrasting journeys on the marriage of Mark and Jane Studdock?



ANALYSIS

1. How does the conclusion of events at Belbury and Bracton fulfil the warning that Ransom gave: “In fighting those who serve devils one always has this on one's side; their Masters hate them as much as they hate us. The moment we disable the human pawns enough to make them useless to Hell, their own Masters finish the work for us. They break their tools” (ch 14, p. 314)?
2. In what ways does the descent of Perelandra (Venus) repair the “insanity” of Belbury by restoring “sanity” to the world?
3. What does the age-old battle between Logres and Britain symbolize? How does that battle transcend England and relate to other cultures?
4. How does the transfiguration of the women and men in their final meal together point to a truer reality than their ordinary habits of life?



DIVING DEEPER

“What is it made of?” said Camilla, fingering and then smelling the green mantle. It was a question worth asking. It was not in the least transparent yet all sorts of lights and shades dwelled in its rippling folds and it flowed through Camilla’s hands like a waterfall. Ivy became interested. “Gor!” she said. “However much a yard would it be?” “There,” said Mother Dimble as she draped it skilfully round Ivy. Then she said, “Oh!” in genuine amazement. All three stood back from Ivy staring at her with delight. The commonplace had not exactly gone from her form and face, the robe had taken it up, as a great composer takes up a folk tune and tosses it like a ball through his symphony and makes of it a marvel, yet leaves it still itself. A “pert fairy” or “dapper elf,” a small though perfect sprightliness, stood before them: but still recognisably Ivy Maggs. “Isn’t that like a man!” exclaimed Mrs. Dimble. “There’s not a mirror in the room.” “I don’t believe we were meant to see ourselves,” said Jane. “He said something about being mirrors enough to see another.”

- Ch 17, p. 360



REFLECTION

1. How does Mark’s final realization represent a significant repentance of his actions throughout the novel? How might his repentance speak to you?

All this, which should have been uneasy joy, was torment to him, for it came too late. He was discovering the hedge after he had plucked the rose, and not only plucked it but torn it all to pieces and crumpled it with hot, thumb-like, greedy fingers. How had he dared? And who that understood could forgive him? He knew now what he must look like in the eyes of [Jane’s] friends and equals. Seeing that picture, he grow hot to the forehead, alone there in the mist.

-ch 17, p. 379

2. What are some key takeaways from *That Hideous Strength* (or the Ransom Trilogy as a whole) that help you to look differently at the world around you? What in this novel has inspired you to better love God? To better love your neighbor?