

Discussion Guide

That Hideous Strength, chs 1–3



OPEN

Mark did not ask again in so many words what the N.I.C.E. wanted him to do; partly because he began to be afraid that he was supposed to know this already, and partly because a perfectly direct question would have sounded a crudity in that room—a crudity which might suddenly exclude him from the warm and almost drugged atmosphere of vague, yet heavily important, confidence in which he was gradually being enfolded.

- ch. 3, p. 52



ENTRY

1. Can you remember a time when you felt a pressure or desire to belong to an inside group, or felt afraid of being considered an outsider?



RECALL

1. What happened in the dream that Jane had, and what does she learn is especially unusual or special about this dream?
2. Describe how the group known as the Progressive Element seem to be getting their way at Bracton College. What are some of the strategies they use?
3. Lord Feverstone, Dick Devine, is the same character we encountered in *Out of the Silent Planet*. How has he changed since we last saw him?
4. What is Jane's reaction to the invitation to join the mission at St Anne's? Compare and contrast this with Mark's experience at Belbury.



ANALYSIS

1. What seems to be some of the problems in the marriage between Mark and Jane? What seems to be Mark's primary contribution to their marital problems? What about Jane's?
2. What was especially sinister about the way the sale of Bragdon Wood was accomplished? What does this tell us about the relationship between the N.I.C.E. and the Progressive Element in the college? What might this be foreshadowing?
3. How is Mark being manipulated by Lord Feverstone, the Deputy Director, Professor Filostrato, and Fairy Hardcastle? What seems to be Mark's primary motivation?
4. What are Jane's fears? What are the perceptions she seems so intent on fighting? How is her journey starting to become the exact mirror of Mark's?



DIVING DEEPER

“Mutual society, help, and comfort,” said Jane bitterly. In reality marriage had proved to be the door out of a world of work and comradeship and laughter and innumerable things to do, into something like solitary confinement. For some years before their marriage she had never seen so little of Mark as she had done in the last six months. Even when he was at home he hardly ever talked. He was always either sleepy or intellectually preoccupied. While they had been friends, and later when they were lovers, life itself had seemed too short for all they had to say to each other. But now... why had he married her? Was he still in love? If so, “being in love” must mean totally different things to men and women, Was it the crude truth that all the endless talks which had seemed to her, before they were married, the very medium of love itself, had never been to him more than a preliminary?

- ch 1, p. 11-12



REFLECTION

1. How does Lewis’s depiction of Mark’s longing to belong help you think about the difference between true friendship, and an “inner ring”? What is the difference between those two kinds of relationships?

You would never have guessed from the tone of Studdock’s reply what intense pleasure he derived from Curry’s use of the pronoun “we.” So very recently he had been an outsider, watching the proceedings of what he then called “Curry and his gang” with awe and with little understanding, and making at College meetings short, nervous speeches which never influenced the course of events. Now he was inside and “Curry and his gang” had become “we” or “the Progressive Element in College.” It had all happened quite suddenly and was still sweet in the mouth.

- ch 1, p. 15

2. Do you see any parallels with the way Lord Feverstone / Devine treats people and powerful people and institutions in our society today?