



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



The Haunting of Hill House
By Shirley Jackson
Discussed October 2014

Characters

Cast:

- Eleanor
- Theodora
- Dr Montague
- Luke
- Mrs Dudley
- Mrs Montague
- Arthur
- Hill House

Others:

- Hugh Crain
- His daughters
- The village companion girl
- Eleanor's Sister
- Eleanor's Mother

Discussion Questions

1. Did you read the book? Did you like it – why or why not?
2. Did you see the film *The Haunting* (the old one)? Did you like it – why or why not?
3. The novel is intensely character driven – what characters stood out to you, and why? Are there characters you thought Jackson did a better or worse job with in writing?
4. What is each character seeking in coming to Hill House? Do they find it?

5. The House itself serves as a critically essential character in the novel – what were your thoughts on the house as character?
6. Family – or lack thereof – plays an essential role in the character's lives – both blood family and family of choice. How did the “family” formed at the House reflect the experiences of the characters with the idea of family prior to their arrival?
7. Gender – The things that Eleanor and Theo experience in the house differ greatly from those experienced by the Doctor and Luke at times. Why do you think that is?
8. Sexuality – whether intended or not, there appears to be a very clear subtext of romance/infatuation between Theo and Eleanor. Theo's never-gender-identified “friend” back home, significant amounts of touching and lingering looks. In the film, Eleanor even suggests that Theo is “unnatural”. Did their interactions read as “lesbian” to you?
9. There are reflections and foreshadowings all over the place – from the narration at beginning and end repeating itself, to Luke talking about “he could have driven the car into a tree”, to the story of the elderly Crain daughter calling for help and the village girl not answering/Eleanor's story about her Mother's death – how did that affect your experience of the book?
10. The arrival of Mrs. Montague and her planchette/methods of investigation seem to mock the premise of the story and the experiences of the foursome. What were your thoughts on her as a character and the perspective she brought to the House?
11. The Manifestations – what were they? Were they real? Was the house haunted? Was it Eleanor?
12. There are some significant differences between the book and the film – in the film Hugh Crain has a single daughter, rather than two who later fight. The women experience a first manifestation before the men even arrive in the film. The banging in the hall occurs their first night in the film. And Mrs. Montague is not at all interested in manifestations in the film. The film also heavily suggests an infatuation between Eleanor and the Doctor, with the wife's arrival being a surprise that serves as the breaking point for Eleanor. How successful an adaptation of the tone/feel of the book do you think the film was? Are there elements you preferred in one over the other?