

We Have Always Lived in the Castle (1962)

Shirley Jackson

Author information:

Shirley Hardie Jackson (December 14, 1916 – August 8, 1965) was an American writer known primarily for her works of horror and mystery. Over the duration of her writing career, which spanned over two decades, she composed six novels, two memoirs, and more than 200 short stories.

Discussion questions:

How is Merricat Blackwood an unreliable narrator? How much of what she says is true?

Discuss the meaning of Constance's name in the story. Does she represent constancy? How so?

What are Charles's intentions when he comes to visit the Blackwoods. The author never tells us exactly, but what can you infer from his actions?

Compare and contrast Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Clarke. What are their motivations for visiting Constance? Who is a more honest character?

Do you think the villagers would behave differently toward the Blackwoods if they really knew them? Why or why not?

What do you think Mary Katherine was like before the murders? Why do you think she murdered her family?

Discuss Uncle Julian's relationship with Charles Blackwood. How does the relationship change over the course of the story?