

Discussion Questions for *With This Curse*
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Warning: Spoilers follow!

If you haven't finished reading *With This curse* and don't want to be spoiled, stop reading now!

1. How does Clara change after being dismissed from her position as chambermaid at Gravesend? How does she change as a result of her marriage to Atticus? Compared to her position at the start of chapter one, in what ways has Clara grown and matured by the end of the novel?
2. Atticus is nicknamed for the mythological figure Atlas, a Titan who was condemned by Zeus to hold up the world or the heavens. In what ways does this nickname suit Atticus? Is the association negative, positive, or both? Why?
3. Clara comes to realize that she has romanticized Richard in her memories of him. In what ways are her memories of Richard inaccurate, idealized, or warped by her own predilections and wishes? What makes her realize that her memories of Richard differ from the reality? What does Clara gain by recognizing that her memories were inaccurate?
4. The past plays a large role in the story, especially Clara's and Atticus's past. In what ways are Clara and Atticus trapped in the past? When do their memories and past experiences interfere with their lives—including their life together—in the story's present? By the end of the novel, have they freed themselves from the past or learned to move beyond it? How?
5. Genevieve's arrival at Gravesend is a catalyst in some ways. What happens as a result of her presence? What response does Clara have to her? Lord Telford? In what ways does knowing Genevieve bring Clara greater understanding of herself and of Atticus? What might Genevieve represent in Clara's eyes?
6. In the Victorian era, women were frequently categorized as either angels or whores, with no gradations in between. In particular, women who strayed from the path of sexual virtue were often demonized. Where do we see this attitude exemplified in the story? What are some of the consequences of this black-and-white categorization? When is a more complex or nuanced view of women shown, and by whom?
7. Class distinctions were very much in force in Victorian England. How do they come into play in the story? In what ways are they harmful or damaging? Is the boundary line between master and servant ever breached in the story, and, if so, what are the consequences?

8. Parenthood is an important motif in the story. What examples do we see of good parenting and bad parenting? To what extent do the characters' parents shape them? Would you describe Clara's mother as a good parent? Lord Telford? Will Clara and Atticus be good parents?
9. Clara's perspective on life—particularly life at Gravesend—is shaped in part by her experience as a chambermaid. What insight does this experience give her that is not present in other characters? In what ways do Clara's years in service give her an advantage in her life as Atticus's wife, and in what ways are they a disadvantage?
10. Clara reflects at one point that secrets can be "poisonous." What are some of the most significant secrets that the characters in the story keep? What are the consequences of these secrets, both when they are kept and when they are revealed? How might the story have been different if all of these secrets had been revealed immediately?