



1. The Hollows asylum is a key setting for both the novel and its namesake. On first sighting the place with Marvena, Lily says, “if one didn’t know they were in a state-run asylum, the scenes would be idyllic” and notes that “Asylum, after all, means a refuge.” How do these statements line up with your own understanding of asylums at that time? How does your view—and perhaps the views of the characters—of *The Hollows* change throughout the novel?
2. The night the action begins, “the full moon ladles light into the deep, clear night.” The moon is used as a tie between the different perspectives introduced in the first few chapters. Can you think of other examples of how the moon plays a role in this story?
3. Before reading *The Hollows*, were you aware of the Women’s Ku Klux Klan? Does the knowledge that there was a women’s branch of this heinous organization change the way you view the women of the time period?
4. The postcards that a young Hildy had received and a present-day Hildy rediscovers are our only firsthand look at Thea’s character, at least until the discovery of her unfinished autobiography. Why do you think the author chose to reveal more of Thea to the reader via her writing? Does Thea’s characterization and story differ from what you expected when Lily was first called to the elderly woman’s body?
5. In Chapter 20 of *The Hollows* an elderly Quaker man says, “Find the wisdom in your grief,” to which Lily can’t help but internally respond: “What nonsense!” In what way does grief shape Lily’s journey in *The Hollows*? Thea’s? Hildy’s?
6. “I defend the rule of law” says Lily during her debate with Perry in Chapter 26. She is speaking specifically about Margaret Dyer beating Olive Harding in this case, but how does this statement work alongside other threads in *The Hollows*? Do you feel this statement could be used to define Lily herself?
7. In Chapter 17, Lily comes across two women chatting over a baby in a baby carriage—normally a heartwarming scene. And yet, she wonders if perhaps these women, her neighbors, might be in the WKKK, and thinks to herself “Can anyone really know their neighbors—what’s more,

### Discussion Questions



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their neighbors' hearts?" How might knowing your own neighbors' views change how you feel about them? Is this unsettling? Difficult? Or is it helpful to reconsider our assumptions that those around us view the world in the same way as we do?

8. Though good friends, Hildy and Lily are very different kinds of women, which leads to them sometimes misunderstanding or misreading the other. How do the way these two women view each other impede the growth of their friendship? Are there instances where it aids them?
9. Did you relate to Hildy's or Lily's point of view more throughout the story? Why?
10. Men and misogyny play a part in this novel, but in many cases our female protagonists are pitted against other women: Hildy against her mother, Margaret Dyer against Olive Harding, and of course, the majority of the WKKK against Lily's reelection campaign. What do you think this adds to the story? What does it say about women during this time period, and even our own?
11. Kinship and family are an important thread throughout *The Hollows*, from the discovery of Dyer's real family, to Hildy's relationship with her mother and with Thea, to Lily's worry for her children, to the novel's last scene, of Jurgis and Marvena's wedding. How is family celebrated in the novel? Are there times when the ties that bind get a bit too tight for some of these characters?