

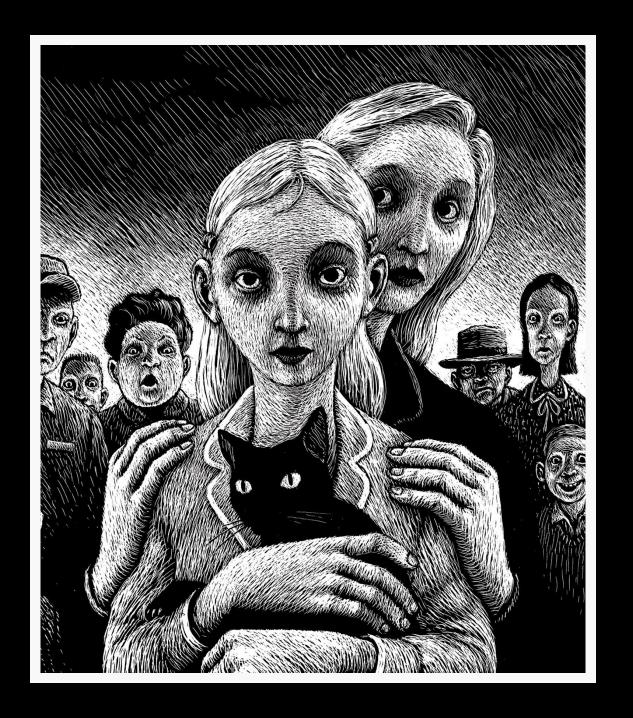




SHIRLEY JACKSON

We Have Always Lived in the Castle

Illustrations by THOMAS OTT





"My drawings are nightmares, states of anxiety. I work out things in them that are on my mind. Things I may have observed in reality and then try to interpret as a parable or a metaphor. My work has an exorcising effect. I feel a sense of relief every time I set a story loose. My art is gloomy by definition because of the scratch-board technique I use. But, of course, the gloominess is also a reflection of how I see the human race."





SHIRLEY JACKSON

Her most famous works—"The Lottery" (1948) and *The Haunting* of Hill House (1959)—are more famous than her name and have sunk into cultural memory as timeless artifacts, seeming older than they are with the resonance of myth or archetype. Shirley Jackson (1916-1965), however, produced a body of work that is more varied and complex than most critics have realized. Jackson was one of the few writers to anticipate the transition from modernism to postmodernism and should rank among the most significant writers of her time. In We Have Always Lived in the Castle (1962), she revisits the persecution that launched her career while also addressing key postmodern concerns. Perhaps more than any of her other works,

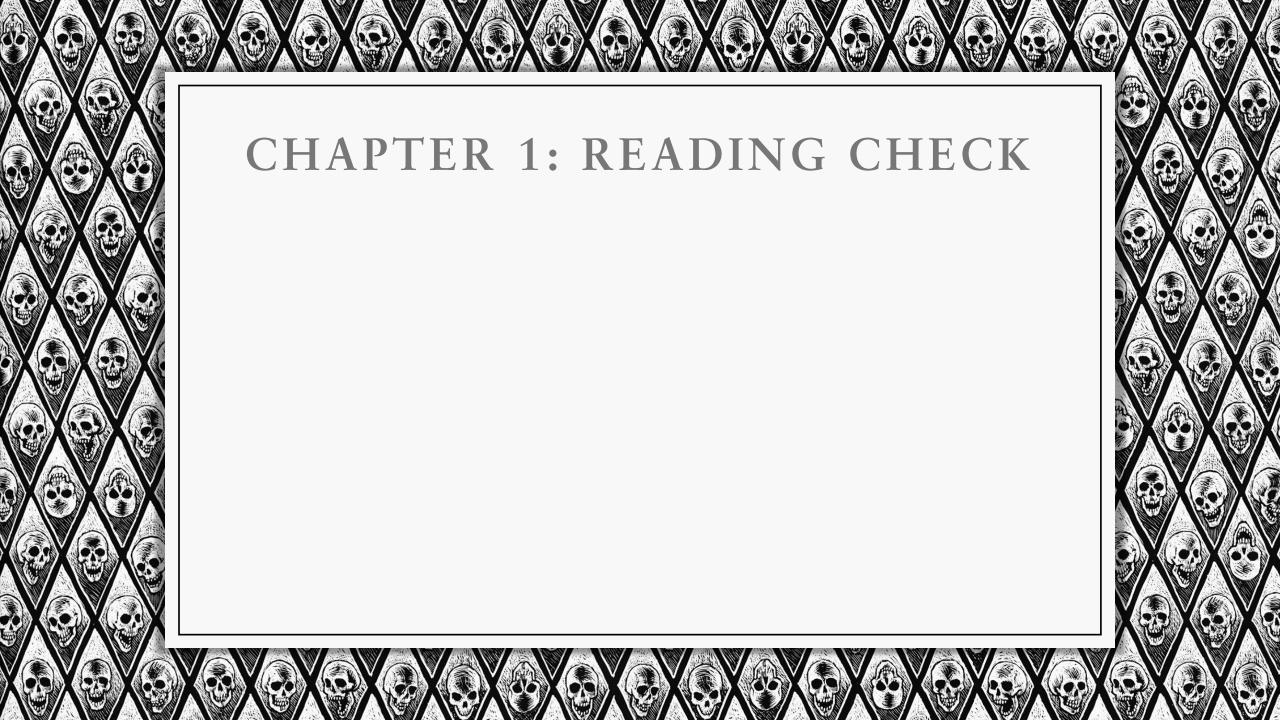
her last novel uses the literary double idea as a psychological fable: In a strategy she'd been perfecting since the start of her writing, that of splitting her aspects among several characters in the same story, Jackson delegates the halves of her psyche into two odd, damaged sisters. Moreover, We Have Always Lived in the Castle capped off her recurrent use of architecture as a metaphor for the self as well as her increasingly complex form of unreliable narration. It also highlights her lifelong theme of writing about writing with the character of Uncle Julian.

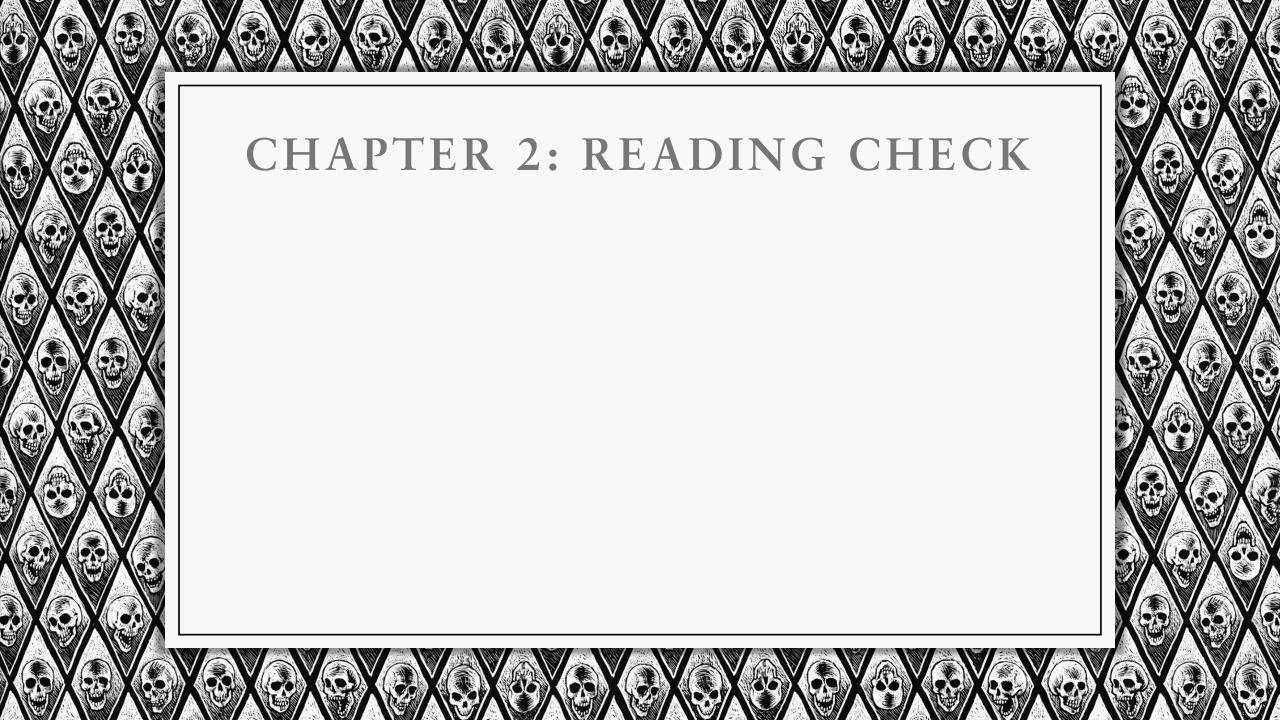


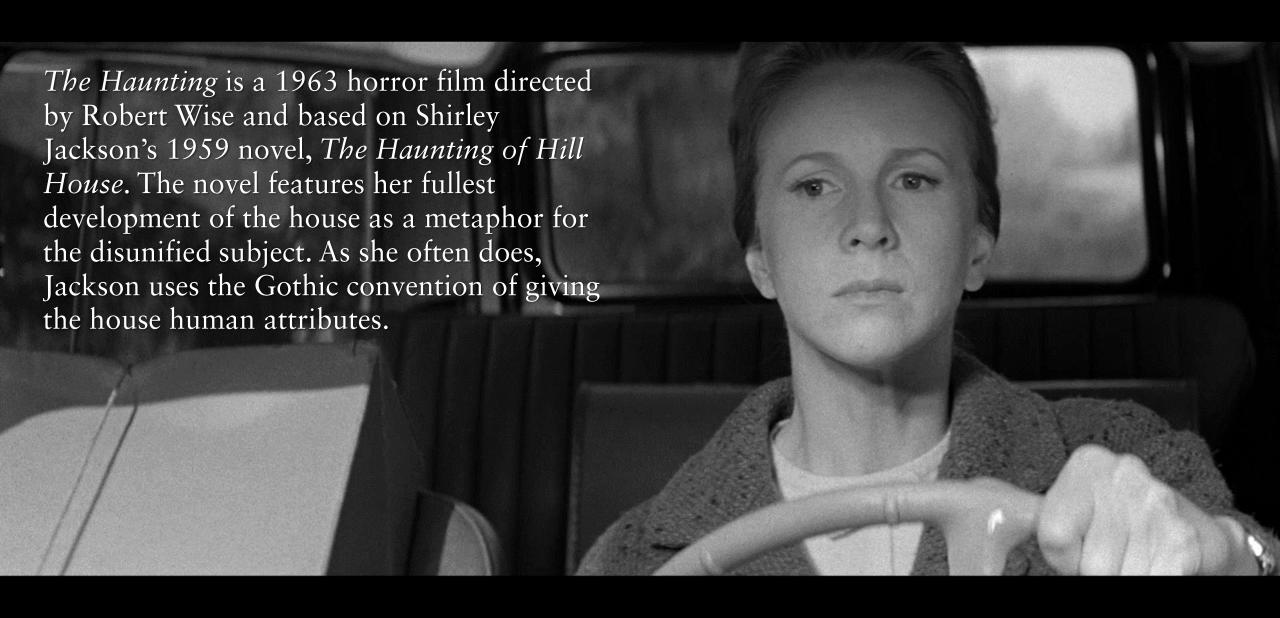
"I like my sister Constance, and Richard Plantagenet, and Amanita phalloides, the deathcup mushroom."

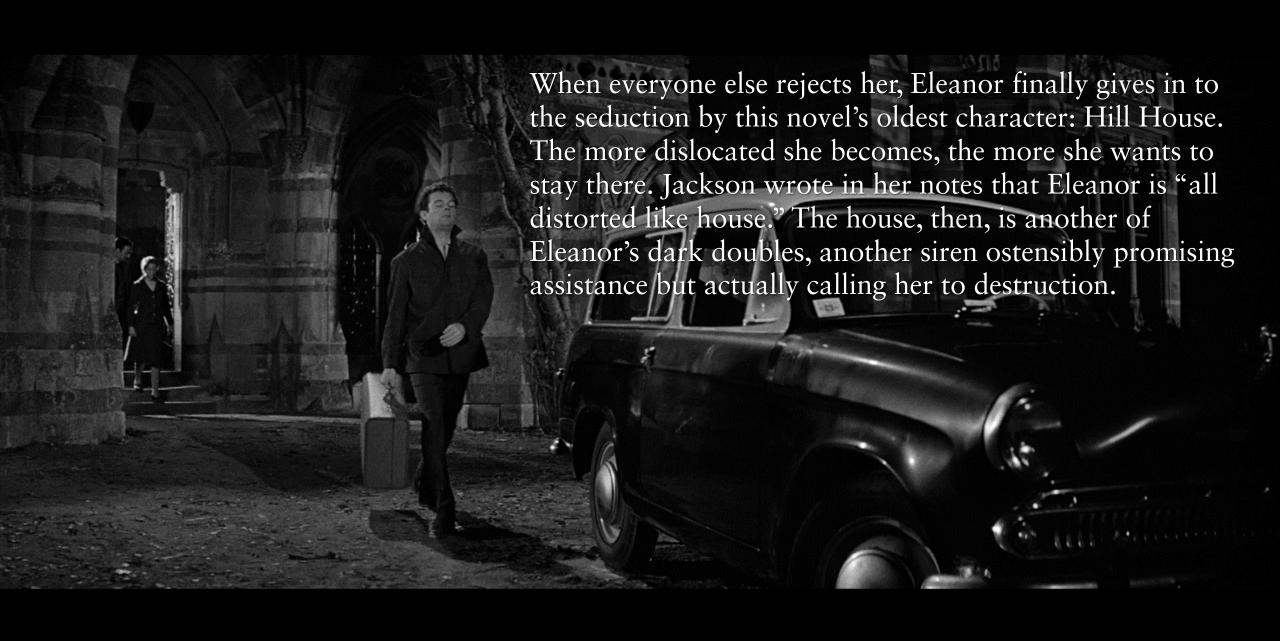
Although Richard Plantagenet could be any one of several English noblemen, context suggests that Merricat is referring to England's King Richard III (1452–1485), who is famously believed to have ordered the murder of his two young nephews in the Tower of London. The themes of murder and a family power struggle emerge from this reference. These themes and Merricat's admitted fondness for a deadly mushroom sharpen our expectations and foreshadow the rest of the story.



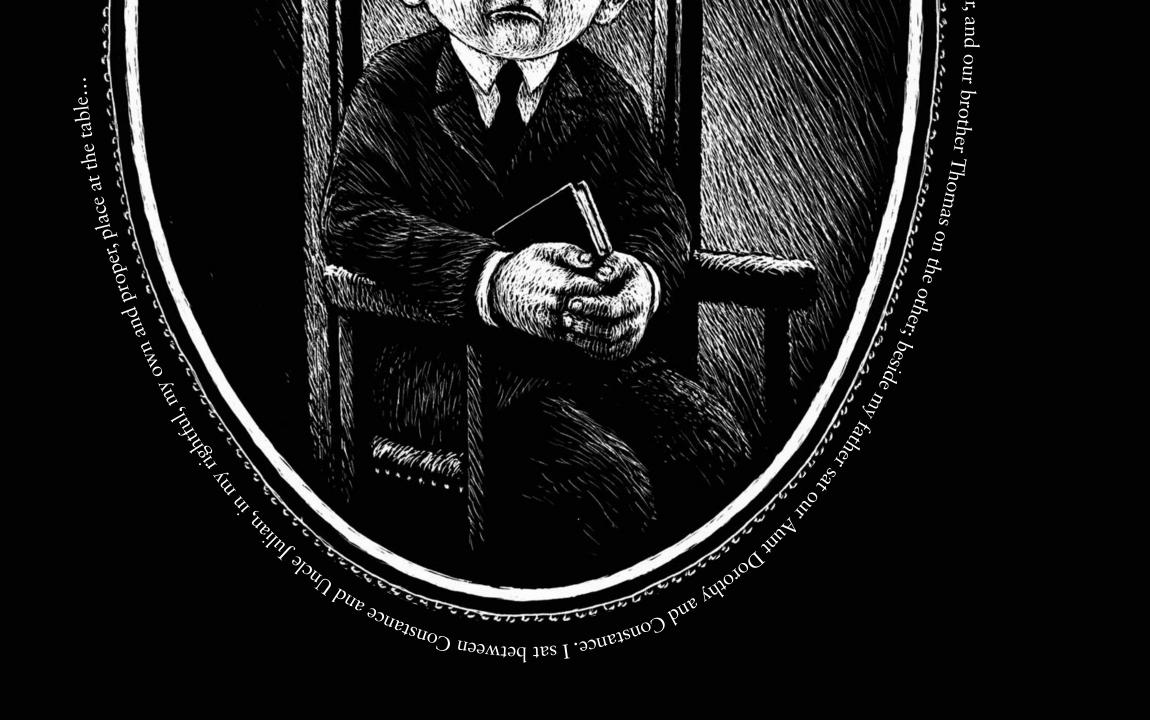


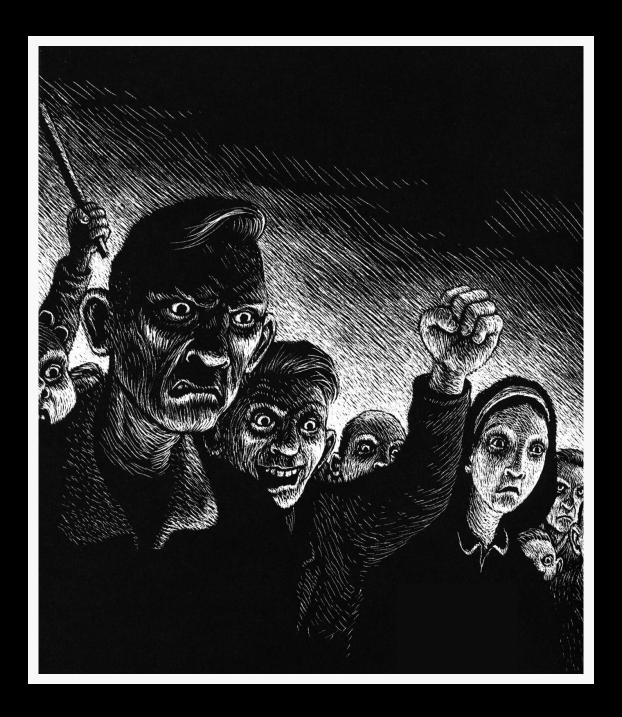












CHAPTERS 7 AND 8: READING CHECK



Antihero. The chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that which we associate with the traditional protagonist or hero of a serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual, or dishonest. The term "antihero" is usually applied to writings in the period of disillusion after the Second World War. Extreme instances are the characters who people a world stripped of certainties, values, or even meaning.

