

Thematic Guide for: *The Man Who Was Thursday*

Firstly, read and annotate the novel *The Man Who Was Thursday* by G.K. Chesterton prior to returning from summer break. While you read, review the selections from the text below, and take note of any stylistic or thematic features they may contain. Lastly, review the questions posed in the middle column that pertain to each selection, and provide some thoughts about any of them in the spaces provided.

We will have a timed writing assessment on the second day of class (due to the modified 8-bell schedule on day 1). Come prepared with knowledge of the text, as we will not review any of the content of the text ahead of your assessment.



Reading Selection - Chapter 1

“An artist is identical with an anarchist...”
to
“It is to me indeed ‘Victoria’; it is the
victory of Adam.”

Questions:

How does this image challenge the idea that order is boring or oppressive? How might this selection prepare readers for the novel’s larger question of whether order ultimately triumphs over evil?

Notes/Page #:

Reading Selection - Chapter 2

“What is it you object to? You want to
abolish government?”
to
“They are much more troublesome to
me.”

Questions:

What might happen to a society that denies objective moral distinctions?
How does this exchange connect moral chaos with political or social chaos?
What does Chesterton suggest about the relationship between truth, morality, and freedom?

Notes/Page #:

Reading Selection - Chapter 2

“...order and anarchy...”
to
“...I wonder when you would ever
see the lamp by the light of the
tree.”

Questions:

How does this metaphor suggest that freedom depends upon order rather than replacing it? Which image—the lamp or the tree—better represents the way Chesterton understands civilization?

Notes/Page #:

Reading Selection - Chapter 4

"Gabriel Syme was not merely a
detective..."
to
"But there was just enough of the
blood of these fanatics ..."

Questions:

Why might choosing order or truth
become a radical act in a culture that
celebrates rebellion? How does Gabriel's
"revolt into sanity" complicate common
ideas about independence? What does
this suggest about the difference between
genuine freedom and mere opposition?

Notes/Page #:

Reading Selection - Chapter 4

"It is a chance not to be missed..."
to
"...These I call the innocent section."

Questions:

How does this view explain the
anarchists' understanding of evil?
According to Chesterton, what are the
dangers of denying personal
responsibility? How does this section
connect to the novel's exploration of the
problem of evil?

Notes/Page #:

Reading Selection - Chapter 4

"Naturally, therefore, these people talk
about 'a happy time coming...'"
to
"How can I join you?"

Questions:

Why does Chesterton connect the
rejection of struggle with the rejection
of life itself? In what ways does the
novel suggest that confronting evil is
part of living rather than something
that can simply be eliminated?

Notes/Page #:

Reading Selection - Chapter 15

"I never hated you..."
to
"Can ye drink of the cup that I drink
of?"

Questions:

What distinction is Chesterton making
between criticizing a government's actions and
rejecting government itself? Why might
authority provoke resentment even when it is
not acting unjustly? By the end of the novel,
how does Chesterton answer the question of
whether authority is ultimately an enemy of
freedom or its necessary foundation?

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