

Books by the Stack



In a Dark, Dark Wood by Ruth Ware

Leonora Shaw is a crime writer who lives a solitary life in London until she receives an invitation to a hen party for a friend she hasn't seen in nearly ten years. The party takes place in a remote location with spotty phone service. We know from the opening pages that something horrible happens, but just what, and to whom, how, and why will keep readers guessing.

Why you'll like it: *Psychological suspense, intricately plotted, fast-paced, menacing.*

About the Author: Ruth Ware grew up in Lewes, in Sussex. After graduating from Manchester University she moved to Paris, before settling in North London. She has worked as a waitress, a bookseller, a teacher of English as a foreign language and a press officer. *In a Dark, Dark Wood* is her debut thriller. Ruth's second novel, *The Woman in Cabin 10*, became a Sunday Times and New York Times bestseller. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. Nora is a mystery writer who thrives on routine. As a novelist, she is in control of each book's narrative; in her personal life, she takes utmost care to control her environment, her health, and her social life. Why is it so important for Nora to be in control? How is she stripped of that control throughout the novel? How does Nora respond as her mental state and her freedom become increasingly uncontrollable?
2. What techniques does Ware use to increase the tension and suspense throughout the novel? Discuss specific moments that were unnerving for you, and how Ware kept you on edge.
3. The protagonist goes by Nora, Lee, Leo, or Leonora, depending on to who she is speaking. Even her novels are published under a different name: L. N. Shaw. What do Nora's various past and present identities say about her personality and her motivations? Why is she so adamant that everyone at the hen party call her "Nora"? Why does Lee stutter, but Nora does not?
4. *In a Dark, Dark Wood* shifts between past and present. How did this shifting impact your reading of the novel and your perspective on the various characters? What is gained by switching back and forth between time periods?
5. How does Ware foreshadow the harrowing events of Saturday night? Did you see the twists coming, or were you surprised by the novel's outcome?
6. Why is running so important to Nora's well-being and her mental state? Why does Nora always feel a need to escape, and what are her fears when she is not able to run?
7. How does the glass house become a character in the book? How does the author convey its

remoteness, and how does the house itself take on an increasingly sinister quality over the course of the weekend? How does Flo's story about the house's construction and her aunt's struggles with the villagers impact your perception of the house?

8. Describe Nora's relationship with James. Is it reasonable to think that her feelings toward him would be what they are after a decade?
9. Why is Flo so extremely loyal to Clare? Is she simply a weak person looking to latch on to someone more confident and secure, or is there something else at play in their relationship? How are Nora and Flo's relationships with Clare similar? Why does Clare act the way she does, especially toward Nora and Flo? What does Clare stand to gain by identifying herself with and buoying up people who are so different from her?
10. Did you find Nora to be a reliable narrator? Identify key moments where you trusted her, and key moments where you doubted her. What techniques does Ware use to make Nora seem both reliable and unreliable at various points in the novel?
11. Many of the characters were actors, and there is a great deal of talk about various plays and shows—Tom met Clare while working in the theater, and Nora and James first met when Clare fell ill, and Nora, the understudy, took on Clare's leading role. The glass house is referred to numerous times as a stage with an audience of trees beyond its windows. Why is all this talk of actors and performances so significant in the novel? Which characters perform the most, and why? Which performances did you see through, and which did you believe?
12. What do you think happens to the characters after the novel is over? How do you think the events of the weekend will impact each of them in their lives and relationships going forward?

(Questions provided by the author)

