

Books by the Stack



A Single Man by Christopher Isherwood

George is a gay middle-aged English professor in suburban 1960s Southern California, adjusting to solitude after the death of his partner. He is determined to persist in the routines of his former life, which is shown over the course of an ordinary day. Behind his British reserve, tides of grief, rage, and loneliness surge but what is revealed is a man who loves being alive despite the everyday injustices.

Why you'll like it: *Stream of consciousness. Solemn. Frank. Playful.*

About the Author: Christopher Isherwood, born in Cheshire, England, in 1904, wrote both novels and nonfiction. He was a lifelong friend of W.H. Auden and wrote several plays with him, including *Dog Beneath the Skin* and *The Ascent of F6*. Isherwood immigrated to the United States in 1939 and became a U.S. citizen in 1946. He lived in California, working on film scripts and adapting plays for television. His other works include *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, about life in Germany in the early 1930s; *Down There on a Visit*, an autobiographical novel; and *Where Joy Resides*, published after his death in 1986. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. What is your impression of the novel?
2. The novel takes place over the space of one day? Why do you think the author chose to place his novel in such a short span of time?
3. Explore George's moods throughout the day. How does the first person narrative affect our sympathies and understandings of each of the characters?
4. George plays many roles in the novel: monster to the neighboring kids, flirtatious friend to Charley, caring visitor to the dying, respectable professor. Explore the idea of performance in the novel and the idea that we all are asked to perform certain roles in life.
5. George is a grieving man who acutely misses the easy communication that existed in his relationship with Jim. Explore gaps and misunderstandings in the conversations throughout the novel.
6. Did you find the novel bleak? Where is the humor found?
7. The novel shocked many on publication. Look at the way desire is represented.
8. Reading *A Single Man* is a liberating experience. Do you agree?

