

till we have faces cs lewis

Till We Have Faces CS Lewis: Exploring the Depths of a Profound Myth Retelling

till we have faces cs lewis is more than just a phrase; it's the title of one of C.S. Lewis's most compelling and thought-provoking novels. Unlike his more famous works such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Till We Have Faces* stands apart as a profound exploration of love, identity, faith, and the human condition. This novel, published in 1956, offers readers a rich blend of mythological retelling and philosophical inquiry that continues to captivate and challenge audiences today.

In this article, we'll dive deep into the essence of *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis, examining its themes, characters, and timeless relevance. Whether you're a longtime fan of Lewis or a curious newcomer, this exploration will shed light on why this novel remains a significant piece of literature.

Understanding Till We Have Faces by C.S. Lewis

Till We Have Faces is a retelling of the ancient Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche, but with a unique twist. Lewis chose to narrate the story from the perspective of Psyche's sister, Orual, which adds a layer of complexity and emotional depth absent from traditional versions of the myth.

The Storyline at a Glance

The novel is set in the fictional kingdom of Glome and follows Orual, a princess who struggles with feelings of jealousy, love, and bitterness towards her younger sister Psyche. Psyche becomes the bride of a mysterious god, and Orual's journey to understand and accept this divine reality forms the heart of the narrative.

The story is divided into two parts: the first, a series of personal journals written by Orual, and the second, a more philosophical and reflective account of her quest for truth and reconciliation. This dual structure allows readers to experience Orual's transformation intimately.

Thematic Richness in Till We Have Faces

One of the reasons *Till We Have Faces* resonates so deeply is because of its exploration of timeless themes that reach beyond the myth itself.

Identity and Self-Perception

The title itself hints at the novel's preoccupation with identity — “faces” symbolize the true self, the authentic inner being that must be confronted and acknowledged. Orual's struggle is, at its core, a struggle to see herself and others clearly, beyond illusions and self-deception.

Lewis uses Orual's “mask” as a metaphor for the façades people wear to protect themselves from vulnerability. *Till We Have Faces* challenges readers to question how often we hide our true emotions and intentions and the consequences of living behind these masks.

Love and Sacrifice

Love is portrayed in various complex forms—familial, romantic, divine. Orual's love for Psyche is both protective and possessive, highlighting how love can sometimes blind us. The novel also explores the idea that true love requires sacrifice and humility, a theme that resonates with Lewis's Christian worldview without being overtly doctrinal.

Faith and Doubt

Till We Have Faces is often regarded as Lewis's most mature treatment of faith. Orual's journey is a metaphor for the human spiritual quest—filled with questions, anger, and longing for understanding. Lewis does not shy away from portraying doubt and frustration as integral parts of faith rather than signs of weakness.

This nuanced portrayal makes the novel especially meaningful for readers who wrestle with their beliefs or seek a deeper spiritual insight.

Characters That Stay with You

The characters in *Till We Have Faces* are vividly drawn and psychologically complex. Lewis's gift for character development shines through, inviting readers to empathize with Orual's inner turmoil and growth.

Orual: The Flawed Narrator

Orual is a deeply human protagonist—imperfect, passionate, and often contradictory. Her introspective narration reveals her insecurities and fierce love, making her journey one of self-discovery and redemption.

Psyche: The Enigmatic Sister

Psyche serves as both a symbol of beauty and innocence and a catalyst for Orual's transformation. Her willingness to embrace the divine unknown contrasts with Orual's skepticism, setting up a poignant dynamic.

The God (Cupid)

In Lewis's version, the god is a mysterious figure who embodies the divine, challenging human understanding. His interactions with Psyche and Orual raise profound questions about the nature of love and the divine-human relationship.

Literary Style and Symbolism

Till We Have Faces is notable for its lyrical prose and rich symbolism. Lewis's writing style in this novel is more somber and reflective compared to his children's literature, allowing for a deeper emotional and intellectual engagement.

Use of Myth and Allegory

By reimagining the Cupid and Psyche myth, Lewis taps into universal narratives about transformation and the search for meaning. The story serves as an allegory for the human spirit's yearning for truth and the challenge of accepting reality as it is.

Symbolism of Faces

Faces in the novel represent identity, truth, and recognition. The idea that "we cannot see ourselves clearly until we have faces" encapsulates the novel's core message about self-awareness and spiritual awakening.

Why *Till We Have Faces* Still Matters Today

Despite being written over half a century ago, *Till We Have Faces* remains profoundly relevant. Its exploration of love, faith, and identity resonates in a world where people often struggle with authenticity and belonging.

Insights for Modern Readers

- **Understanding Self-Deception:** Orual's journey encourages readers to reflect on their own masks and the ways they might be avoiding uncomfortable truths about themselves.
- **Navigating Complex Relationships:** The novel's portrayal of family dynamics and love offers valuable perspectives on jealousy, sacrifice, and forgiveness.
- **Spiritual Exploration:** For those interested in faith, Lewis's nuanced treatment of doubt and belief provides a compassionate framework for spiritual questioning.

Tips for Reading Till We Have Faces

If you're considering diving into *Till We Have Faces*, here are a few tips to enhance your reading experience:

- **Read slowly and reflectively:** The novel's themes are dense and layered, so give yourself time to ponder the meanings behind the narrative.
- **Familiarize yourself with the myth of Cupid and Psyche:** Having some background on the original myth can enrich your understanding of Lewis's reinterpretation.
- **Pay attention to Orual's perspective:** Remember that the story is filtered through her biases and emotions, which is key to grasping the novel's depth.
- **Discuss with others:** This book lends itself well to book clubs or discussion groups where multiple viewpoints can deepen your appreciation.

Exploring the Legacy of Till We Have Faces

C.S. Lewis considered *Till We Have Faces* one of his best works, and many literary critics agree. The novel has inspired countless readers and writers to explore mythology, psychology, and spirituality in new ways. Its influence extends beyond literature into philosophy and theology, making it a rich text for interdisciplinary study.

In classrooms and reading circles, *Till We Have Faces* sparks conversations about the nature of truth and the human soul — conversations that are as vital now as they were when Lewis penned the novel.

Whether you approach it as a mythological retelling, a spiritual allegory, or a psychological drama, *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis offers a uniquely rewarding journey into the heart of what it means to be human.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central theme of 'Till We Have Faces' by C.S. Lewis?

The central theme of 'Till We Have Faces' is the exploration of love, faith, and self-understanding, focusing on the transformation of the protagonist, Orual, as she confronts her own flaws and perceptions.

How does 'Till We Have Faces' differ from other works by C.S. Lewis?

Unlike Lewis's more famous works like 'The Chronicles of Narnia,' 'Till We Have Faces' is a mature, psychological retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, written in a more serious and introspective style targeting adult readers.

Who is the narrator of 'Till We Have Faces,' and why is this significant?

Orual, the protagonist and sister of Psyche, narrates the story. Her perspective is significant because it offers a complex, biased, and evolving viewpoint that challenges traditional myth interpretations and emphasizes personal growth.

What role does mythology play in 'Till We Have Faces'?

'Till We Have Faces' reimagines the myth of Cupid and Psyche, using it to explore timeless human experiences such as love, jealousy, and the search for divine understanding, blending myth with psychological insight.

Why is the title 'Till We Have Faces' important to understanding the novel?

The title signifies the idea that true human identity and understanding—our 'faces'—are revealed only through love and self-acceptance. It reflects the protagonist's journey toward seeing herself and others clearly.

What philosophical or religious themes are present in 'Till We Have Faces'?

The novel delves into themes of faith, the nature of the divine, the problem of suffering, and the quest for meaning, reflecting Lewis's Christian beliefs while engaging with questions of doubt and spiritual transformation.

Additional Resources

Till We Have Faces CS Lewis: An In-Depth Exploration of the Novel's Themes and Legacy

till we have faces cs lewis stands as one of the most profound and intellectually stimulating works by the renowned author C.S. Lewis. Diverging from his more widely known works like *The Chronicles of Narnia*, this novel delves into deeper philosophical and theological questions through a retelling of the ancient myth of Cupid and Psyche. Since its publication in 1956, *Till We Have Faces* has attracted critical acclaim for its intricate narrative, rich symbolism, and exploration of human nature. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the novel, highlighting its narrative structure, thematic depth, and enduring relevance in literary and academic circles.

Narrative and Structure: A Myth Reimagined

Till We Have Faces CS Lewis employs a unique narrative approach by reinterpreting the classic myth of Cupid and Psyche from a fresh perspective. The story unfolds through the eyes of Orual, the elder sister of Psyche, whose voice is rarely heard in traditional tellings of the myth. This first-person narrative creates a deeply personal and emotional viewpoint, allowing readers to engage intimately with Orual's internal struggles and evolving understanding.

The novel's structure is divided into two distinct parts: the first focusing on Orual's life and her complex relationship with her sister, and the second on her spiritual and emotional journey toward self-awareness and acceptance. This bifurcation enriches the storytelling by providing a contrast between worldly suffering and divine revelation, a hallmark of Lewis's literary style.

The Use of Myth as a Vehicle for Philosophical Inquiry

By anchoring the narrative in myth, Lewis taps into universal themes of love, jealousy, faith, and identity. The retelling allows the novel to transcend the boundaries of time and culture, making it relevant to contemporary readers regardless of their background. This mythological framework also serves as a canvas for Lewis to explore existential questions about the nature of the divine and human perception.

Unlike traditional renditions where Psyche's beauty and innocence take center stage, *Till We Have Faces* shifts the focus to Orual's psychological complexity and spiritual blindness. The title itself suggests the quest for true identity — "faces" symbolizing the masks individuals wear and the challenge of seeing oneself and others clearly.

Thematic Exploration: Faith, Love, and Self-

Discovery

Central to *Till We Have Faces* is an exploration of faith and the struggle to reconcile human emotions with divine will. Orual's journey is essentially a spiritual odyssey, characterized by doubt, anger, and eventual humility. Her initial resentment towards the gods and her sister's fate reflects a common human response to suffering and injustice.

The Complexity of Love

Lewis presents love not as a simplistic, romantic ideal but as a multifaceted and often painful force. Orual's love for Psyche is possessive and distorted, illustrating how love can sometimes blind individuals to truth. In contrast, Psyche's mysterious relationship with the god of the mountain symbolizes a purer, more transcendent love, though it remains elusive and misunderstood by Orual.

This contrast highlights the novel's meditation on different dimensions of love—earthly and divine—and the difficulty of fully grasping or accepting the latter. *Till We Have Faces* CS Lewis thus challenges readers to consider how love can be both redemptive and destructive.

Faith and the Human Condition

Throughout the novel, faith is portrayed as a complex and evolving concept rather than a fixed doctrine. Orual's spiritual blindness—her inability to “have faces” or see the divine truth—mirrors the human struggle to comprehend God's nature and intentions. Lewis avoids presenting a simplistic resolution; instead, he acknowledges the ambiguity and mystery that often accompany genuine faith.

This nuanced portrayal resonates with readers who appreciate literature that grapples with doubt and the search for meaning, positioning *Till We Have Faces* alongside other profound works of theological fiction.

Character Development and Psychological Insight

The psychological depth of Orual's character is a standout feature of the novel. Her internal conflicts, feelings of inadequacy, and emotional turmoil are rendered with remarkable sensitivity and complexity. Lewis's portrayal transcends the archetype of the jealous sister, offering instead a richly layered personality whose flaws and virtues are intimately intertwined.

Orual's Transformation

Orual's evolution from a bitter, possessive sibling to a figure of self-awareness and humility is central to the narrative arc. Her ultimate confrontation with the gods and acceptance of her own limitations mark a profound moment of catharsis. This transformation is both spiritual and psychological, illustrating the novel's overarching theme of self-discovery.

Supporting Characters and Their Symbolism

Characters such as Psyche, the Fox (Orual's wise advisor), and the god of the mountain serve symbolic roles that deepen the novel's allegorical texture. Psyche represents innocence and divine mystery, while the Fox embodies worldly wisdom and skepticism. The god's silence and elusiveness challenge Orual—and readers—to grapple with the inscrutable nature of the divine.

Critical Reception and Literary Impact

Since its release, *Till We Have Faces* CS Lewis has garnered significant critical attention, often praised for its literary ambition and thematic richness. Unlike Lewis's more accessible children's literature, this novel appeals primarily to adult readers interested in myth, theology, and the human psyche.

Comparisons with Other Works by C.S. Lewis

While Lewis is widely celebrated for *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Till We Have Faces* occupies a distinct place in his oeuvre. The novel's serious tone, complex narrative, and philosophical depth contrast sharply with the allegorical yet imaginative style of *Narnia*. Scholars note that this work reflects Lewis's own theological and existential reflections later in life.

Enduring Relevance

The novel continues to be studied in academic settings for its fertile ground in myth criticism, religious studies, and psychology. Its themes of identity, faith, and love remain relevant in contemporary discourse, offering readers a timeless meditation on human experience.

Why *Till We Have Faces* Remains a Must-Read

For readers seeking a novel that challenges conventional storytelling and prompts profound reflection, *Till We Have Faces* CS Lewis offers a rewarding experience. Its intricate narrative, coupled with its thematic complexity, invites multiple readings and

interpretations.

- **Philosophical Depth:** The novel raises enduring questions about the nature of the divine, faith, and human perception.
- **Psychological Complexity:** Orual's character is a study in emotional depth and personal transformation.
- **Mythological Richness:** A fresh retelling of an ancient myth provides a timeless allegory accessible to modern audiences.
- **Literary Craftsmanship:** Lewis's prose is elegant and evocative, enhancing the immersive quality of the narrative.

Despite its acclaim, some readers may find the novel's dense symbolism and philosophical themes challenging. The pacing differs from Lewis's more popular works, favoring introspection over action. However, these qualities contribute to its status as a literary classic.

Till We Have Faces CS Lewis ultimately invites readers into a deeply personal and spiritual journey that transcends the confines of myth and fiction. It challenges us to question how we see ourselves and others, and whether we can ever truly "have faces" — authentic identities unmasked by fear or falsehood. In this way, the novel remains a powerful exploration of the human condition, resonating across generations and literary traditions.

[Till We Have Faces Cs Lewis](#)

till we have faces cs lewis: TILL WE HAVE FACES C. S. Lewis, 2016-05-02 This carefully crafted ebook: *TILL WE HAVE FACES* is formatted for your eReader with a functional and detailed table of contents. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* is a retelling of a story about Cupid and Psyche. This story had haunted Lewis all his life, because he realized that some of the main characters' actions were illogical. As a consequence, his retelling of the story is characterized by a highly developed character, the narrator, with the reader being drawn into her reasoning and her emotions. This was his last novel, and he considered it his most mature, written in conjunction with his wife, Joy Davidman. The first part of the book is written from the perspective of Psyche's older sister Orual, as an accusation against the gods. The story is set in the fictive kingdom of Glome, a primitive city-state whose people have occasional contact with civilized Hellenistic Greece. In the second part of the book, the narrator undergoes a change of mindset (Lewis would use the term conversion) and understands that her initial accusation was tainted by her own failings and shortcomings, and that the gods are lovingly present in humans' lives. Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was a British novelist, poet, academic, medievalist, lay theologian and Christian apologist. He is best known for his fictional work, especially *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *The Space Trilogy*, and for his non-fiction Christian apologetics, such as *Mere Christianity*, *Miracles*, and *The Problem of Pain*.

till we have faces cs lewis: TILL WE HAVE FACES (Cupid & Psyche - The Story Behind the Myth) C. S. Lewis, 2023-12-29 In *Till We Have Faces*, C. S. Lewis masterfully reinterprets the ancient myth of Cupid and Psyche, exploring profound themes of love, jealousy, and the intricate nature of the divine. Written in a richly imaginative narrative style, the novel unfolds through the eyes of Orual, Psyche's elder sister, whose struggles with fidelity and self-identity offer a fresh perspective on the classical tale. Lewis employs a unique blend of psychological depth and philosophical inquiry, positioning Orual as a multidimensional character whose poignant journey reflects the complexities of human emotion and the often-unseen facets of divine love, ultimately culminating in a powerful exploration of the conflict between appearances and reality. C. S. Lewis, renowned for his contributions to literature and theology, draws upon his own profound experiences with faith and personal loss in crafting this poignant narrative. His deep understanding of myth and powerful storytelling skills are evident throughout the novel, as he seeks to interrogate the nature of truth and our perceptions of the divine. Lewis's background in academic philosophy and his connection to Christian thought enrich the text, making it resonate on both emotional and intellectual levels. For readers seeking a thought-provoking examination of mythology, *Till We Have Faces* stands as a remarkable testament to Lewis's literary genius. This novel not only enchants the imagination but also invites reflection on the meaning of love, sacrifice, and self-awareness. It is a compelling read for anyone interested in the intersections of mythology, religion, and the human condition.

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till we have faces cs lewis: Till We Have Faces Clive Staples Lewis, 1984 Haunted by the myth of Cupid and Psyche throughout his life, C.S. Lewis wrote this, his last, extraordinary novel, to retell their story through the gaze of Psyche's sister, Orual. Disfigured and embittered, Orual loves her younger sister to a fault and suffers deeply when she is sent away to Cupid, the God of the Mountain. Psyche is forbidden to look upon the god's face, but is persuaded by her sister to do so; she is banished for her betrayal. Orual is left alone to grow in power but never in love, to wonder at the silence of the gods. Only at the end of her life, in visions of her lost beloved sister, will she hear an answer.

till we have faces cs lewis: *Till We Have Faces* C. S. C. S. Lewis, 2021-04-15 *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* is a 1956 novel by C. S. Lewis. It is a retelling of Cupid and Psyche, based on its telling in a chapter of *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. This story had haunted Lewis all his life, because he realized that some of the main characters' actions were illogical.

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Glome. The city of Glome was built on the left bank of the river Shennit, not more than a day's journey above Ringal, which was the last town south of Glome. The god of the Grey Mountain, who hated me, was the son of Ungit. #4 My father made a great match. He was to have the third daughter of the King of Caphad, who is the biggest king in our part of the world. The wedding preparations lasted for almost a year.

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till we have faces cs lewis: **TILL WE HAVE FACES (Cupid & Psyche - The Story Behind the Myth)** C. S. Lewis, 2023-12-05 C. S. Lewis's Till We Have Faces reinterprets the ancient myth of Cupid and Psyche through a richly layered narrative that blends allegory with philosophical inquiry. Set in the fictional realm of Glome, the novel is narrated by Orual, Psyche's elder sister, who grapples with issues of love, jealousy, and the human condition. Lewis employs an elegant prose style, imbued with a mythic quality, that engages readers in profound moral and ethical dilemmas, challenging conventional views on divine love and personal sacrifice. This work is often regarded as Lewis's most mature fiction, embodying a synthesis of classical mythology and Christian thought, and stands out within the canon of modern literary explorations of myth and identity. C. S. Lewis, renowned for his theological works and fantasy novels, was deeply influenced by his own spiritual journey and interest in mythology. His background in literature, as well as his profound Christian faith, guided him to create a nuanced tale that examines the interplay between the mortal and the divine. Lewis sought to delve deeper into the motivations of characters often portrayed in simplistic terms, offering a fresh perspective that resonates with contemporary audiences by addressing timeless questions about human nature. I wholeheartedly recommend Till We Have Faces to those interested in a thought-provoking exploration of mythology reimagined through a lens of psychological depth and moral complexity. Lewis' masterful storytelling invites readers to navigate the labyrinth of the human heart, making it an essential read for anyone seeking a profound understanding of love, identity, and the sometimes turbulent relationship between humanity and the divine.

till we have faces cs lewis: Till We Have Faces Kathleen Desocio, 2006-01-30

till we have faces cs lewis: **C. S. Lewis** Bruce L. Edwards, 2007-04-30 Most popularly known as the author of the children's classic The Chronicles of Narnia, C. S. Lewis was also a prolific poet, essayist, novelist, and Christian writer. His most famous work, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, while known as a children's book is often read as a Christian allegory and remains to this day one of his best-loved works. But Lewis was prolific in a number of areas, including poetry, Christian writing, literary criticism, letters, memoir, autobiography, sermons and more. This set, written by experts, guides readers to a better understanding and appreciation of this important and influential writer. Clive Staples Lewis was born on November 29, 1898, in Belfast, Northern Ireland. His mother died when he was young, leaving his father to raise him and his older brother Warren. He fought and was wounded in World War I and later became immersed in the spiritual life of Christianity. While he delved into the world of Christian writing, he did not limit himself to one genre and produced a remarkable oeuvre that continues to be widely read, taught, and adored at all levels. As part of the circle known as the Inklings, which consisted of writers and intellectuals, and included J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and others, he developed and honed his skills and continued to put out extensive writings. Many different groups now claim him as their own: spanning genres from science fiction to Christian literature, from nonfiction to children's stories, his

output remains among the most popular and complex. Here, experts in the field of Lewis studies examine all his works along with the details of his life and the culture in which he lived to give readers the fullest complete picture of the man, the writer, and the husband, alongside his works, his legacy, and his place in English letters.

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