

The Island of Dr. Moreau—Study Questions
Reading Fiction 106

Note: Be sure to refer to the critical introduction and notes in our Penguin edition

1. Examine the character Prendick. What is his background? Is he a rounded character who is static (remains the same) or who is dynamic (changes, grows)? (See the critical intro: pp. xiv-xvi.) What key observations and conclusions does he make throughout the novel that pinpoint some of the novella's themes? Find several passages in the text to support your thoughts. For example, in chapter XVI, Prendick makes some significant statements. Also, consider the conclusion (chapter XXII).
2. What does the novella reveal about scientific method and the purpose of science? Is the novella a warning against science? A warning against flawed scientific method? What role do morality and ethics play in scientific method? (See the critical intro: pp. xvii-xviii.) What qualities does a scientist need to possess?
3. Examine the character of Montgomery. Should we consider him a bridge between Dr. Moreau and Prendick? How so? Consider his background and why he ends up on the island with Dr. Moreau. What do you make of his death?
4. Analyze the chapter (XIV) "Doctor Moreau Explains." What is Dr. Moreau's argument for the purpose and credibility of his experiments? What does this argument reveal about Dr. Moreau? Is he mad? A visionary? A god-like figure driven by pride? A devoted, cold, calculating scientist? A misguided dreamer? Consider his background. Is his death at the hands of his creations inevitable?
5. How do you characterize the Beast Folk? Are they animals? Human? Hybrids? What is their relationship to the Law? What does the novella suggest about human nature? What makes us human? What does it mean to be a human being? Consider the references and allusions to Darwinism. Also, what responsibility, if any, does Dr. Moreau, the creator, have for the Beast Folk, his creations? Do Montgomery and Prendick have a responsibility for them?
6. In a novella that focuses on men, what is role of the puma, a female creature who ends up killing Dr. Moreau? (See the critical intro: pp. xxiii.)
7. Consider Prendick as narrator. How does he tell his story—his style and language? Is he an effective narrator (who is also a character)? Also, consider the function of the Introduction to the novella, written by Prendick's nephew.