

## Discussion Questions for “North and South” by Elizabeth Gaskell

1. How would you describe the genre of the novel? If a friend asked you what it was about, how would you respond?
2. How do Mr. Thornton’s views on the preferred relationship between masters and workers evolve? How does Margaret evolve as a character?
3. Describe some of the opposing personalities in the story. Why does Mrs. Thornton dislike Margaret so intensely?
4. Did you find the author’s themes of justice and conscience too didactic? What are some examples?
5. How did you like the author’s style? (Long descriptive passages, dialect.) Were you surprised to learn that Charles Dickens edited this novel when he published it as a series in a family magazine?
6. What role is played by the narrator throughout? Is she an important part of the novel’s tone and effect? How would the novel have been altered by the excision of authorial comments?
7. Why is Nicholas Higgins considered one of the most sympathetic characters?
8. What are some events which form the context for this novel? How did you feel about the depiction of Irish people? What stereotypes stood out?
9. What motivates Mr. Hale’s departure from the Anglican clergy? Are the actual grounds for his reservations given? Why do you think Gaskell, a Unitarian, is so cautious in presenting his views?
10. Are there instances in which the behavior of characters seems unrealistically presented?