

# THE WOMAN IN WHITE

by Wilkie Collins



## THE AUTHOR

William Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) was born in London, the son of a successful landscape painter and member of the Royal Academy, who was also very strict with both his religion and his money. While his son inherited much of his father's parsimony, he rebelled against the strict morality of his upbringing, and against Victorian morality in general. After the death of his father, he scandalized his family and friends by setting up housekeeping with Caroline Graves, a young woman who already had a daughter, and presumably a husband. Even when the opportunity presented itself later in life, he refused to marry her, encouraged her to marry another man, and then moved in with her again when that marriage failed. In the meantime, he kept a mistress on the side, Martha Rudd, by whom he had three children. At his death, he divided his estate equally between his two mistresses and two families. Through much of his life, he was plagued by bad health. He was small and somewhat deformed, and rheumatism contracted in his thirties caused him to take increasingly-large doses of laudanum. He himself admitted that he was a bit of a hypochondriac, and eventually became a recluse much like Frederick Fairlie in *The Woman in White*.

To please his parents, he tried the tea business for five years and later studied law, but had no love for either pursuit. He was drawn to the arts, as was his brother Charles, who for a time worked among the Pre-Raphaelites (and later married Charles Dickens' daughter), and determined to be a writer. His big break came when he met Charles Dickens in 1851. The two were soon fast friends, collaborating on short stories for the magazine edited by Dickens. Collins' first mystery novel was *Basil* (1852), followed by two plays, *The Lighthouse* (1855) and *After Dark* (1856), which Dickens both produced and acted in. When Dickens started a new periodical, *All the Year Round*, he proposed that Collins become his collaborator. The first serial novel published in the magazine was Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*; the second was *The Woman in White* (1860). The story was so successful that it tripled the magazine's circulation and started a new literary trend - the Sensation Novel. Later novels, including *No Name* (1862), *Armada* (1866), and *The Moonstone* (1867), considered the first detective novel (and notably critical of British imperialism in India), were also serialized in Dickens' magazine, and the two men worked together on some of the periodical's famous Christmas stories. After Dickens' death, Collins' popularity began to fade as his health declined and his living arrangements became more scandalous.

Despite the popularity of *The Moonstone*, *The Woman in White* is considered by most critics to be Collins' best novel. Collins chose to follow the style of the epistolary novel, in which different parts of the story are told by different character, much as would be the case in a courtroom trial. He successfully varies the style of his writing as he speaks through the different characters, to the extent that the segments purportedly written by Frederick Fairlie and Count Fosco are so permeated by their peculiar personalities that they are somewhat annoying to read. The novel is filled with excitement - dark, lonely roads and old mansions, the ghostly figure of the Woman in White (based on his strange first encounter with Caroline Graves), mistaken identities, dangerous secrets, the nefarious use of drugs, and scenes of arson and murder. The novel also contains aspects of Collins' criticism of Victorian social standards. Marian Halcombe, the real heroine of the story (and said to be based in her intense ugliness and great intelligence on Mary Anne Evans, better known as George Eliot), is a woman who, despite her humility and willingness to submit to the leadership of Walter Hartright, has strength and independence that allow her to take initiative to save her sister and bring her the unwanted admiration of the overbearing Count Fosco. Class prejudices are challenged through the middle-class drawing master Walter Hartright who eventually inherits a grand estate, and prejudices against illegitimacy and mental illness are countered by making poor Anne Catherick a sympathetic figure.

## **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

- Walter Hartright - A drawing teacher who is engaged by Frederick Fairlie to instruct his niece Laura Fairlie and her half-sister Marian Halcombe. Walter and Laura soon fall in love, and marry after many trials and tribulations.
- Frederick Fairlie - A selfish invalid who hires Hartright to instruct his nieces.
- Laura Fairlie - A beautiful heiress who falls in love with Walter Hartright, but is forced instead to marry Sir Percival Glyde, by whom she is treated shamefully and incarcerated in an asylum under a false name.
- Marian Halcombe - Laura's plain but intelligent half-sister, she is devoted to Laura and does all she can to protect and help her.
- Professor Pesca - An Italian expatriate who teaches his language in England, he was once saved from drowning by Hartright and is responsible for getting him the job at Limmeridge. He also plays a key role in foiling the plans of Count Fosco.
- Anne Catherick - The seemingly-deranged Woman in White, she is the illegitimate daughter of Laura's father Philip Fairlie, and had been committed to an asylum by Percival Glyde because she knows his great secret. She dies of a heart ailment, and is buried under the name of Lady Glyde.
- Jane Anne Catherick - Anne's mother, she cooperates with Glyde in his conspiracy and keeps his secret until after his untimely death.

- Mrs. Clements - Anne's friend and companion who accompanies her on her visit to Limmeridge.
- Mrs. Vesey - Marian's former governess, she is so placid and inert that Hartright compares her to a cabbage, but she is a faithful friend to her former pupils.
- Louis - Frederick Fairlie's Swiss valet.
- Mr. Gilmore - The Fairlie family solicitor, he reluctantly arranges the details of Laura's marriage to Sir Percival Glyde, then suffers an illness that removes him from the rest of the story.
- William Kyrle - Gilmore's partner, he advises Walter, Marian and Laura while Gilmore is recuperating from an illness, but argues that they have no legal case.
- Sir Percival Glyde - A forty-five year old baronet, he is engaged to Laura Fairlie and marries her. Because he married her only for her money, he tries to force her to sign it over to him, and when she refuses, confines her to an asylum under the identity of Anne Catherick. After his violent death in a fire, Walter and Laura marry.
- Mr. Merriman - Glyde's solicitor, he designs the marriage settlement that gives all of Laura's property to Glyde should she predecease him without bearing children.
- Count Fosco - Sir Percival's best friend, he is the story's chief villain. He plots against Laura's life in order to get the Fairlie inheritance for his wife.
- Eleanor Fosco - The sister of Philip and Frederick Fairlie, she had a falling out with Philip when she married Count Fosco. She is next in line for the Fairlie fortune should Laura fail to produce a satisfactory heir.
- Eliza Michelson - Sir Percival Glyde's housekeeper.
- Margaret Porcher - A rough and brutal housemaid in Sir Percival's employ.
- Fanny - Laura's personal maid, she is abruptly dismissed by Sir Percival so he can gain more complete control over Laura.
- Dr. Dawson - The physician who comes to attend Marian during her bout of typhus.
- Dr. Goodricke - He attends Anne Catherick, whom he believes to be Lady Glyde, in her final illness.
- Mrs. Rubelle - A nurse brought in from London by Madame Fosco to help care for Marian in her illness, she is really a spy in the employ of Count Fosco.

## PLOT SUMMARY

### FIRST EPOCH

The author begins the story with a Preamble, in which he tells the reader that the story will be told by several different narrators in much the same way that different witnesses give testimony in a court case. The first to speak is Walter Hartright, a 28-year-old drawing teacher. He tells of going to visit his mother and sister at Hampstead, where he encounters an old friend, Professor Pesca, a teacher of Italian who, out of gratitude toward the nation that gave him refuge, seeks to become as English in his behavior and fashion as possible. Years earlier, Hartright had saved him from drowning, earning his everlasting gratitude in the process. On this day, Pesca excitedly tells the family of a job opportunity that he has secured for Walter teaching drawing to two young ladies at Limmeridge House in Cumberland. Walter is inexplicably hesitant to take the job, but does so after hearing the entreaties of his family and friend.

He leaves Hampstead after midnight and begins to walk back to London. On the way, he is suddenly approached by a woman dressed all in white. She is clearly afraid, and asks for his help. He offers to do anything he can, and the two walk toward London, saying little as they travel. Walter does discover that she grew up in Cumberland and has fond memories of Limmeridge and the Fairlie family. When they reach London, he hails a cab for her and sends her off. Soon two men come by looking for the same woman, and insist that she has escaped from their asylum. Hearing these words, Walter wonders whether he has assisted a flight from unjust imprisonment or allowed a poor madwoman to escape safe confinement, especially since he had detected no signs of madness in the woman.

He leaves for Cumberland the next day and, after some misadventures on the railroad, arrives at Limmeridge the following night, where he is shown immediately to his room without meeting any of the family. The next morning, he comes down to breakfast where he meets a young woman with a lovely figure but an ugly face, swarthy with the hint of a mustache. She is clearly intelligent and open. Her name is Marian Halcombe; she is the companion and dearest friend of her half-sister Laura Fairlie, and Laura's uncle, the current occupant of Limmeridge, is the brother of her late stepfather (Laura's father). She acquaints Walter with the inhabitants of the house, informing him that Laura is very rich but that she has nothing, that Laura is musically gifted but that she can't play a note, and that neither of them can draw with any skill whatsoever. During their conversation, Walter tells her about his encounter with the mysterious Woman in White and of her connection with Limmeridge, and Marian is immediately intrigued, so much so that she offers to go through her mother's old letters to see if they contain any information that would allow her to identify the woman.

Walter is then summoned to the room of Mr. Fairlie. Here he finds an invalid cleaning his coin collection who is totally self-absorbed. Doctors can find nothing wrong with him, yet he insists he cannot tolerate too much light, sound, or movement, nor can he exert energy of any kind. He is surrounded by expensive art objects, and asks Hartright to clean and mount a recent set of watercolors he has purchased. By the time their conversation is over, Walter is glad to emerge into the fresh air, and vows to visit his employer as infrequently as possible. At lunch he meets Mrs. Vesey, the old governess, but still Laura Fairlie does not appear. Marian notices Walter stealing glimpses toward the door, and tells him that Laura will be found in the summer house. They walk the grounds after lunch, and Walter gets his first look at Laura, who to him is

the essence of all that is beautiful. She is clearly naive and innocent, but something about her strikes Walter as strange, though he can't figure out what it is. The three retrieve Mrs. Vesey and take a carriage ride while Hartright examines the drawings the girls have done. He gives little attention to the artwork, however, as his mind is unaccountably directed elsewhere. After dinner, the four settle in the drawing room - Mrs. Vesey instantly falls asleep, Laura plays the piano under Walter's rapt gaze, and Marian goes through the remainder of her mother's letters. When Walter and Laura go out on the terrace, Marian calls him back in and reads an excerpt from one of the letters; it speaks of a young girl named Anne Catherick who came to Limmeridge to attend Mrs. Fairlie's school. She appeared to be mentally underdeveloped, but she was kind and gracious. When Mrs. Fairlie gave her a white dress, she was so grateful that she insisted she would always wear white for the rest of her life. The letter ends with a puzzled reference to the remarkable similarity in appearance between Anne and Laura. Marian and Walter agree to keep this information from Laura, despite the fact that she might be able to give information that would provide insight into the mystery.

In the three months that follow, Hartright falls in love with his beautiful pupil, and she with him, though neither speaks a word of their mutual affection. Marian, who cannot fail to miss such a development, shares with the two of them the conviction that such a relationship is impossible because of the difference in their social positions. The following Thursday, Marian summons Hartright to the summer house, tells him that she knows his secret and that Laura shares his affection, and insists that he must leave the house as soon as possible - not because he is a drawing teacher, but because Laura is already engaged to be married. The marriage is an arranged one to a baronet she does not love - Sir Percival Glyde, who is to visit the following Monday. Walter sees the wisdom in her advice and agrees to follow it. Later that morning, Laura receives an anonymous letter impugning Sir Percival's character, in the process describing him perfectly. Marian shares the letter with Hartright, and he instantly thinks of the Woman in White, who had come from Hampshire, Sir Percival's home county, and had expressed great trepidation concerning some unnamed baronet. Though Marian knows of nothing against Glyde's character, she and Walter decide to consult the family solicitor, Mr. Gilmore, when he arrives the next day.

Meanwhile, Walter and Marian decide to question people on the estate and in the town of Limmeridge to try to find out something about the old woman who had carried the letter and about its author. The gardener is of no help, nor are most of the villagers, though some admitted having seen the woman. When they go to the school that had been founded by Mrs. Fairlie, however, they find Mr. Dempster, the schoolmaster, chastening a young pupil who had insisted that he had seen a ghost the night before. Marian questions the child, and finds that he had seen a woman in white near her mother's grave, and had naturally drawn the conclusion that it was the ghost of Mrs. Fairlie. Walter shares his suspicion that Anne Catherick had been the writer of the letter with Marian, and goes to examine the gravesite. He finds no footprints, but does discover that the tombstone has been partially cleaned. When he questions the sexton's wife, he finds that her husband had been too ill to attend to the graves for several months. He then determines to return to the cemetery that night, hoping to encounter the Woman in White again.

Once he gets to the cemetery, Hartright conceals himself. Soon two women appear - the elderly woman who delivered the anonymous letter, one Mrs. Clements, and the author of it, Anne Catherick. Anne soon begins to clean Mrs. Fairlie's gravestone, and Hartright approaches her, reminding her of his earlier kindness. He discovers that she has only arrived in Cumberland two days earlier, and is staying with friends of Mrs. Clements. He tries to question her about the

reason why she wrote the letter, but she speaks only indirectly. Her greatest fear is being returned to the asylum. When he sounds her out about possible sexual abuse, she makes no response, but when he mentions the name of Sir Percival Glyde, she screams in terror. The only possible conclusion that he can reach is that Glyde was responsible for confining her to the asylum. He can discover no other reason for the strong cautions expressed in the anonymous missive. When he returns to Limmeridge House, he quickly relates his experience to Marian Halcombe.

The next morning, Hartright attempts to get permission from Mr. Fairlie to leave his employ, but the invalid refuses to see him, requesting a letter instead. Walter complies, and the current occupant of Limmeridge House rudely accedes to his request. Walter then convinces Marian to try to contact Anne Catherick at Todd's Corner, where she is staying, and question her further. When they arrive at the farm, they discover that Anne and Mrs. Clements have already returned to London in an obvious state of agitation. Marian questions both Mrs. Todd and her daughter Hannah, and can discover nothing more than that Anne's agitation was caused by a brief article in the newspaper announcing Laura's impending wedding, which was the cause of the anonymous letter, and household gossip about the coming visit of Sir Percival Glyde, which sent Anne into a tailspin and fixed her determination to leave Cumberland at once. Marian is now convinced that Glyde is somehow connected to Anne's misery, and is determined for Laura's sake to find out the nature of the connection.

The next day is Hartright's last at Limmeridge House. Mr. Gilmore, the family solicitor, arrives, with whom Walter is favorably impressed. He assures Walter that he will take the necessary steps, including tracing Anne and her companion (an endeavor that ended in failure), sending a copy of the letter to Glyde's solicitor, and confronting Sir Percival with the original, though he appears to be confident that the Baronet will produce an acceptable explanation. The day is a hard one for Walter, and the final evening in the drawing room is a trial for both him and Laura. The next morning he leaves, presumably never to see the family again, though both sisters assure him of their trust and friendship and promise to call on him should the need ever arise. As he leaves, Laura gives him a drawing she made of the summer house where they first met.

Mr. Gilmore, the solicitor, at this point takes up the narrative. When he arrives at Limmeridge House, he finds both the place and the people less cheerful and lively than they had been in past years. When he speaks to Mr. Fairlie about the coming marriage, he finds him concerned only with his own comfort and anxious that the marriage should proceed so he would not have to be bothered about it. When Sir Percival Glyde arrives the following Monday, Gilmore finds him admirable in appearance and manner. He takes the initiative to explain his connection with the Catherick family, saying that Mrs. Catherick had done some service in his household, but had married and moved away. When he heard that her husband had left her and that her daughter was showing signs of emotional instability, he offered his help. When the mother admitted she could not afford treatment for Anne, Sir Percival had offered to bear the full expense of her treatment. When Anne found out about his role in her incarceration, she had become furious with him, thus explaining her letter to Laura. Glyde freely gives Gilmore and Marian the name and address of the asylum, the names of the doctors who signed the commitment papers, and insists that Marian write to Mrs. Catherick to confirm his story. In turn, he asks for the location of Todd's Corner so he can trace Anne and return her to the care she requires. Gilmore is fully satisfied, and is surprised at Marian's continued uneasiness.

In the days that follow, Glyde continues his attentiveness to Laura. His visit to Todd's Corner produces no new information, the letter from Mrs. Catherick confirms Sir Percival's story, and he assures both Gilmore and Marian that Laura is free to break their engagement should she choose to do so. Marian tells Laura about Glyde's explanation for the events surrounding Anne Catherick and informs her that Sir Percival is anxious to set a date for their wedding. Laura is clearly reluctant, and asks to be given until the end of the year to make up her mind. When Gilmore stops by her room to bid her farewell, he speaks to her of the marriage settlement he must prepare, and she somewhat peculiarly begs that it include a provision that Marian should always live with them, and that all her property should pass to Marian should she predecease her. She also hints at the bequest of a small memento to some unnamed person. Despite the fact that Glyde has behaved in a manner that is beyond reproach, by the time Gilmore leaves, he and Marian share an inexplicable hope that Laura will reject his overtures.

Gilmore returns to London, and in a week receives a letter from Marian indicating that Laura has accepted Sir Percival's proposal, but neglecting to tell the reasons. The wedding is to take place in late December. As Marian and Laura travel in Yorkshire, Gilmore prepares the marriage settlement. The agreement has three major provisions: Limmeridge House is to come to Laura at her uncle's death, then to her husband, her oldest son, and her cousin if no issue should be produced. Ten thousand pounds would go to Laura's aunt, Eleanor Fosco, should she predecease her, then to her cousin Magdalen. A sum of twenty thousand pounds would go to Laura when she reached the age of twenty-one (which she would do four months after her marriage), and would be entirely at her disposal; the income from it would go to her husband for life, and the principal to their children, but if no children were produced, the principal could be given to anyone Laura would choose, such as her half-sister Marian. This last clause brings the strongest objection from Glyde and his solicitor, Mr. Merriman. They insist that the principal should go entirely to her husband should Laura predecease him without issue. Gilmore soon finds out that the reason for this is that Glyde is carrying enormous debts and has little income, despite his fancy title. Gilmore's hands are tied, however, when Mr. Fairlie, with his usual carelessness, tells him to go along with whatever Sir Percival wants, since the chance of a twenty-year-old girl dying before her forty-five-year-old husband would be extremely remote. Gilmore can do nothing more than stall for time. He determines to go personally to Cumberland to try to talk some sense into Fairlie. At the train station, he encounters Walter Hartright, who is looking haggard and distraught, having received notice of the impending marriage from Marian. He tells Gilmore that he intends to find employment abroad. Glyde, meanwhile, has been having Hartright followed, hoping to gain some intelligence of Anne Catherick's whereabouts. Gilmore's trip to Limmeridge is an exercise in futility, as he is unable to persuade Mr. Fairlie to change his mind. He then returns to London and reluctantly rewrites the settlement according to Glyde's wishes.

The narrative at this point continues with excerpts from Marian Halcombe's diary. After Gilmore leaves, Laura summons Marian and tells her that she cannot break the engagement because she cannot go against the word of her father. She is determined, however, to tell Sir Percival that her heart has been given to another, though no words of love have ever been exchanged between them and no hope exists of them ever marrying. Her hope is that this confession will cause Glyde to break the engagement himself. Marian has reservations about the wisdom of such an approach, and her reservations are fully justified when Glyde, in the kindest language imaginable, affirms that he wants to go forward with the wedding, hoping to earn

Laura's love in the future. Laura cannot understand why anyone would want to marry a woman who has testified that she could never love him, but has committed herself to him by placing the decision in his hands. Laura realizes that the situation is now hopeless. Her uncle urges that the marriage should go forward as soon as possible, and Laura calls Marian to her room, locks up all her drawings done under Hartright's tutelage, and gives Marian the key. She takes Walter's sketchbook, places a long lock of her own hair in it, and entrusts it to Marian, begging that she give it to Hartright if she should die, and tell him of her love for him. Laura becomes increasingly cold and distant, and the trip to Yorkshire helps very little. When they return to Limmeridge, they find that Walter has sailed for Honduras as the draftsman on an archaeological expedition, and that the wedding date has been set for December 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Marian is entrusted with negotiating arrangements for the honeymoon. Given the choice of Rome or London, she favors the former, believing that getting Laura out of the country will do her good. She is especially thankful to find that Count Fosco and his wife, who is Laura's aunt, will be among their acquaintances in Rome, thinking that this will expedite the healing of an old feud between Philip Fairlie, Laura's father, and his sister, Eleanor Fosco. Laura is pleased at the thought, thinking that Marian will accompany them, but is distraught to find that honeymoons are strictly private. Laura tries to ply Marian with questions about Walter Hartright, but Marian tells her nothing. Laura recognizes the wisdom of this, and asks that Marian will not mention her name in any future correspondence with her former drawing-master. As preparations proceed, Marian finds herself vacillating wildly in her estimation of Sir Percival. When she thinks rationally, she admits that he has many admirable qualities and has done nothing to earn her doubt or fear. Yet when she gives full play to her emotions, she hates him and wishes him gone forever. One day shortly before the wedding, Marian encounters Glyde on the moor. He has just come from Todd's Corner, but has again failed to find out anything more about the fate of Anne Catherick. Marian is impressed by this selfless concern for the poor woman, knowing nothing of its true cause. Meanwhile, Sir Percival informs Marian that he would be delighted to have her live with them in London and in Hampshire after their marriage. Mr. Fairlie, of course, will be unable to attend the wedding because it would be too much for his nerves, and cares only that as little as possible be done to disturb him. Finally the day comes, they are married, and they embark on their honeymoon.

## SECOND EPOCH

Marian's diary continues to be the source of the narrative. The newlyweds have been honeymooning in Europe for the past six months, and she has missed Laura dreadfully. Her letters have been strangely cold and indifferent, saying nothing about her relationship to her new husband and his friends. Furthermore, she has heard nothing from Walter Hartright since his expedition headed into the wilds of Honduras. Gilmore's poor health has forced him to take a year-long sabbatical, while nothing further has been heard from Anne Catherick or Mrs. Clements. Frederick Fairlie is enjoying his solitude, giving all his attention to his precious etchings. On the day before the Glydes are to return home, along with Count Fosco, who is Glyde's best friend, and Eleanor Fosco, who is Laura and Marian's aunt, Marian goes to Blackwater Park in Hampshire, which is to be her new home. She takes an immediate dislike to the place, which she finds dark and gloomy compared to Limmeridge House. As she walks around the grounds, she enters an old boathouse, and there finds a wounded dog. She carries it back to her room and

summons the housekeeper, who tells her that the dog, which had been shot by Baxter, the groundskeeper, belonged to Mrs. Catherick, who had visited the house the day before, seeking news of her daughter. Despite persistent attempts on Marian's part, she is able to get no more information about the unfortunate Catherick family and their relationship to Sir Percival Glyde.

The next day Sir Percival and Lady Glyde return, along with Count Fosco and his wife. Marian finds Laura subtly altered - while before they could freely speak of anything, now Laura, strangely subdued, refuses to say anything to Marian of her marriage or her husband, though she clearly dislikes Count Fosco. Glyde seems nervous and touchy, less attentive both to Laura and Marian. Countess Fosco, who is Laura and Marian's Aunt Eleanor, is wholly altered by her marriage; she is no longer the vivacious flirt of her early adult years, but instead is silent, obedient to her husband, and fiercely jealous of any woman to whom he so much as speaks. Count Fosco, sixty and corpulent with a Napoleonic countenance, is everything Marian would normally dislike, but she feels strangely drawn to him. He speaks beautifully and is knowledgeable about everything (including being one of the world's great experts in experimental chemistry), eats and drinks voraciously, and loves animals - he has brought with him a cockatoo, two canaries, and a cage full of white mice, all of which he allows to perch on him and crawl around his body and clothing. He seems capable of taming people as well as beasts, and Marian feels herself being influenced even as she sees the way he controls his wife and Sir Percival.

As they are having luncheon one afternoon, a man comes to the door. He is Merriman, Sir Percival's solicitor, and his unexpected visit clearly disconcerts the owner of Blackwater Park. When Merriman leaves, Marian overhears him speaking to Glyde about worrisome financial reverses, and the two agree that the only way out is for Laura to sign a document, which Glyde insists she will do. Marian reports the conversation to Laura, who is aware of some financial difficulties and is willing to help her husband if she can do so honestly, but Marian warns her not to sign anything without reading it first. Sir Percival clearly exerts himself to be more pleasant to Laura and Marian, though the effort clearly is not easy for him. He tells Laura that he has a document for her to sign, and that he wants Count and Countess Fosco to witness it. Before this can occur, however, the members of the party take a walk out to the lake, where a conversation about crime ensues. In response to Marian and Laura's assertions that wise men never commit crime and that crime will always reveal itself, Fosco argues that wise men commit crimes that are never detected. He goes on to affirm that morals differ around the world, and that the English pretension to moral superiority is pure sham, since the charitable among them help the wicked poor while allowing the righteous poor to suffer. His cynicism disturbs Laura and Marian, but he is staunchly supported by his wife. When one of his white mice gets lost in the boathouse, he searches for it, and in the process discovers the dog's blood from a few days before. Marian explains the presence of the blood, but cannot avoid mentioning the secret visit of Mrs. Catherick, which greatly agitates Sir Percival, who immediately goes home to question his housekeeper. Fosco is curious about this strange woman, and soon learns from Laura and a reluctant Marian the whole story of the Catherick and their relationship to Sir Percival, at least as far as they know it themselves. When they arrive at Blackwater Park, they find Glyde hurriedly preparing for a journey, which Marian suspects will take him to Welmingham, the home of Mrs. Catherick.

Before he leaves, he insists that Laura should sign the document he had mentioned earlier. He intends to have Fosco and the Countess witness it, but the Count insists that his wife should not serve as a witness, and that Marian should fill that role instead. Glyde reluctantly agrees and invites Marian into the library. When he extracts the document from a locked drawer, he leaves

it folded, exposing only the signature lines, and orders Laura to sign. She quite reasonably objects, as does Marian, and Glyde loses his temper, insulting both women and insisting that a wife should trust her husband implicitly, since she can have no understanding of technical business affairs. Fosco calms him down and argues that the signing can wait another day, but Laura insists that she will sign nothing without reading it in its entirety. After Glyde rushes off, presumably to Welmingham, Marian and Laura compose a letter seeking the advice of William Kyrle, an associate of Gilmore who is managing his legal business. When Marian takes the letter and places it in the outgoing mailbag, Countess Fosco draws her aside for a lengthy conversation - totally out of character for the silent partner of the controlling Count. While she engages Marian in meaningless chatter, Fosco reads the letter, which Marian belatedly decides to seal. She then determines to be present when the mail arrives the following day.

That night after dinner, Laura and Marian take a walk down to the boathouse by the lake. There Laura tells Marian a few brief tales of her married life, confirming Marian's suspicions that Glyde has been treating her coldly and brutally, and married her only for her money. She also learns how, at a party in Rome, Glyde learned the identity of her true love when their hostess casually mentioned the name of her drawing-master and Laura could not help blushing. Ever since that time, Sir Percival has taunted her and threatened violence against Hartright. Marian, realizing the extent of her role in separating the two lovers, feels horrible and overwhelmed with guilt. As they talk, they see a ghostly figure walking near the lake. They call out, but the figure disappears. Later, as they walk back to Blackwater Park, they hear footsteps behind them, but are unable to address the stranger. When they arrive at the house, they quickly ascertain that no one there had been out walking, and wonder who the mysterious stranger, who appeared to be a woman, could have been.

The next day, Laura realizes that she lost her brooch during the previous night's walk and goes to look for it. Marian, meanwhile, goes out to the gate to wait for the daily post. When the messenger arrives, Marian reads Kyrle's letter immediately; the solicitor is certain that Glyde is after Laura's money, and advises her to sign nothing, but instead insist that he examine the document first. Just as the messenger leaves, Count Fosco appears and sees Marian with the letter. He says nothing, but when they get back to the house, he draws Sir Percival aside for a long conversation. When they are done talking, Fosco tells Marian that Glyde will no longer insist on Laura's signing the document for the present time. Since Laura has not yet returned from the search for the brooch, Marian lies down for a nap, and dreams of Walter Hartright. She sees him in dangers from pestilence, murderous savages, shipwreck, and finally standing by a grave from which a shrouded woman is rising. He assures her that all of these things must come to pass, but that he will safely come through them to arrive at the destiny that awaits them all. Marian is then startled from her sleep by the arrival of Laura. She has found the brooch, but not in the way she expected. As she looked around the boathouse, Anne Catherick came silently up behind her, identified herself as the figure who had come near them the night before, and gave her the keepsake jewelry. Anne tells Laura that she is ill and soon to die, but that she will make amends for not being able to prevent her marriage to Sir Percival by telling her his secret - a truth of which he is terrified, and which will give her power over him. Suddenly Anne suspects that they are being observed, tells Laura to meet her the next day in the same place, and disappears into the woods. That evening, Sir Percival is unusually attentive to Laura, which makes Marian suspect that his visit to Mrs. Catherick was successful, and that he has ascertained the whereabouts of Anne and Mrs. Clements.

Laura and Marian make plans to meet Anne Catherick the following afternoon. Laura is to excuse herself from luncheon, and Marian is to follow when the meal is concluded. Surprisingly, Sir Percival leaves the house right after breakfast in the pouring rain and never appears for the midday meal. When Marian arrives at the boathouse, she finds it deserted, but detects signs of a struggle between a man and a woman. She follows the tracks, which lead back to the house, and finds that Sir Percival has locked Laura in her room, dismissed her maid Fanny without explanation, and set Margaret Porcher, an ignorant and evil brute, to guard Laura's room and see that no one is admitted. Marian immediately confronts Sir Percival and protests Laura's treatment, but he merely threatens her with the same if she doesn't keep quiet. At this point Eleanor Fosco intervenes, clearly doing so with the Count's support and encouragement. Fosco persuades Glyde to terminate the imprisonment of his wife, which he angrily and reluctantly agrees to do. Marian rushes to see Laura, and discovers that Count Fosco had overheard Laura and Anne planning to meet and had reported the news to Sir Percival. Glyde had left after breakfast to wait at the boathouse, but Anne had outsmarted him, leaving a message buried in the sand for Laura. Glyde found the message, which assured Laura that Anne would try for another rendezvous later in order to communicate Sir Percival's secret. When Laura arrived at the boathouse, her husband seized her and tried to force the secret out of her, assuming that she knew more than she was telling. Laura gave him a full accounting of her conversation with Anne the day before, but insisted she knew nothings of the secret. He then dragged her back to the house and imprisoned her, swearing that she would not be released until she told all. Marian, horrified that Glyde would lay violent hands on his wife in such a manner, decides to write two letters and send them with Fanny when she leaves the house - one for Kyrle and one for Frederick Fairlie - hoping that the one would be able to take legal means to protect Laura, and that the other would invite Laura and Marian for a long visit at Limmeridge. Ominously, however, Eleanor Fosco overhears part of their conversation, including the part where they refer to the Count as a "miserable spy."

When Marian goes downstairs to try to mend fences with the Count, she discovers that, as she suspected, Madame Fosco had already told the Count what she had overheard. Fosco graciously accepts her apology and begs her to say no more of the matter, but Marian still deeply distrusts him. Marian then returns to her room and writes the letters, carefully locking the door when she is finished, then sneaks out of the house before dinner to take them to Fanny at the village inn. She thinks at one point she is being followed, but is able to spot no one, though when she returns in time for dinner she finds the Count unusually out of breath. Laura is too overcome to join them at dinner - Sir Percival has pounded on her door and threatened her to try to get her to reveal the whereabouts of Anne Catherick. After dinner, the Countess leaves immediately, but when Marian tries to follow suit, the Count detains her for half an hour. She goes upstairs to write in her journal, and when she steps into the library to say goodnight, she finds Madame Fosco panting and out of breath, as her husband had been earlier. Meanwhile, ever since the incident at the boathouse Sir Percival had been seeking a private conversation with Fosco, but the Count continues to put him off.

After everyone else has gone to bed, Fosco and Sir Percival finally adjourn to the library to have their conversation. Marian, however, arranges to overhear it by climbing out onto a narrow ledge beneath her bedroom window and crawling over to the area over the library window. The conversation she hears concerns two problems. Both Glyde and Fosco are seriously in debt and need money very soon; Glyde had taken out loans, at a very high rate of interest, to cover the

shortfall for three months when Laura had refused to sign the document he had forced on her. Fosco, noting that the problem can be solved in two ways - by Laura's signature or by her death - asks Sir Percival to leave the matter in his hands, which his friend agrees to do. The second problem concerns Glyde's unnamed secret, which is in the possession of Anne Catherick and her mother. Glyde has secured Mrs. Catherick's silence by some means, but fears that Anne will tell what she knows. This explains his frantic efforts to locate the woman. He is also convinced that she has already shared his secret with both Laura and Walter Hartright, thus he fears them as well. He refuses to tell Fosco what the secret is, but Fosco assures him that he will apply his cunning to the task of locating Anne Catherick the following day. Marian now knows that both Anne and Laura are in grave danger. Concealing herself on the ledge has exposed her to a steady rain, however, and Marian becomes ill as a result. As she writes what she has heard in her diary, she becomes increasingly weak and passes out. While she is unconscious, Fosco finds and reads her diary, even daring to add a note of his own, to the effect that he holds Marian in the highest esteem, confirms the accuracy of what she has written, and guarantees that any scheme she concocts to foil his plans is bound to fail.

At this point the story is continued by Frederick Fairlie. The author effectively alters his style to reflect the tiresome self-centered pettiness of the man, making this narrative the hardest to endure in the entire book. Fanny arrives and tells of having been given two letters from Marian. Before she could deliver them, she received a visit at the inn from Countess Fosco, who prepared her some tea, which was of course drugged. When Fanny fainted, the Countess found and read Marian's letters, then left before the girl revived. Fanny, who had concealed the letters in her bosom, found them somewhat rumpled but apparently unopened. Frederick Fairlie finds the request to accept a visit from his niece tiresome, and is puzzled to get a letter from the solicitor Kyrle, explaining that the letter he had gotten contained nothing but a blank sheet of paper and wondering if Fairlie knew anything about the matter. He ignores the letter, of course. Shortly he receives a visit from Count Fosco, who tells him of Marian's illness and encourages him to agree to Lady Glyde's proposed visit. In fact, he offers to put her up for the night in his newly-acquired London townhouse during her trip. Fairlie, seeing that all possible trouble has been removed from his hands, agrees to permit the proposed visit.

The narrative now shifts to Eliza Michelson, Sir Percival's housekeeper. She speaks at considerable length of Marian's illness and the provisions made to care for her, in which she was personally involved. She is not a good judge of character, for she admires Count Fosco and his wife and distrusts Dr. Dawson, who is summoned to care for Marian, especially when Fosco's diagnosis of typhus, which Dawson disputes, turns out to be correct. Mrs. Michelson and Countess Fosco take turns sitting with Marian during her treatment, and Laura is almost continually at her bedside. Mrs. Michelson is unable to understand why Marian and Laura are reluctant to receive any food or medication from the hands of the Count or Countess. Countess Fosco goes to London to bring in another nurse, Mrs. Rubelle, to share the duties of caring for Marian, and she is immediately viewed as suspicious by Laura, though Dawson can find nothing objectionable about her, as much as he would like to do so. When Dawson summons another doctor to get a second opinion, the diagnosis of typhus is confirmed, but under constant treatment Marian turns the corner and begins to recover, though she is still extremely weak. Meanwhile, Laura becomes totally exhausted, passes out, and is kept from the sickroom for her own health.

Constant quarrels between Dawson and Fosco cause the former to resign the case, convinced that Marian is on the mend and that Fosco is a quack. Soon after, Sir Percival summons Mrs. Michelson and announces his intention to break up the household - Lady Glyde and Marian need fresh air, the Count and Countess are moving to London, he is leaving for the Continent, and he needs to reduce his household expenses. All of the servants except for Mrs. Michelson, Margaret Porcher, and the gardener are to be gone within twenty-four hours, and the sisters are to leave as soon as their health permits.

One day Sir Percival summons Mrs. Michelson and asks her to do a favor for him, traveling to Torquay to find suitable lodgings for Laura and Marian while they recuperate before going to Limmeridge. The characteristics of the desired housing and the amount she is allowed to spend, however, make her errand an impossible one, and she rightly suspects that her employer simply wants her out of the house. When she returns, she finds that the Count and Countess had left for St. John's Wood in London, and that they have taken Marian and Mrs. Rubelle with them. When Lady Glyde is informed that Marian is gone, and to Count Fosco's house of all places, she insists on leaving the next day to find her sister and accompany her to Limmeridge. After her departure, Sir Percival seems increasingly unbalanced, drinking heavily and losing his temper even more often than usual. After Laura leaves for London, Mrs. Michelson takes a walk in the garden and encounters Mrs. Rubelle, who sneeringly informs her that, not only is she still living at Blackwater Park, but so is Miss Halcombe. Angry with the deception that has been practiced on Lady Glyde, Mrs. Michelson confronts Sir Percival with the intention of resigning and leaving the house immediately. When she is told that Mrs. Rubelle is leaving that afternoon and that he intends to leave the following morning, she decides to stay and care for Marian, who would otherwise have been left alone in the house. She summons Dr. Dawson to help minister to the still-weak Miss Halcombe, and stays with her until she is well enough to travel. By that time, the worst of Marian's fears had been confirmed.

A series of brief narratives follow, beginning with that of Hester Pinhorn, the cook at St. John's Wood. She was hired when Count Fosco took the house outside London, and shortly after the arrival of the Count and Countess, Lady Glyde [actually Anne Catherick] comes for a visit. She goes upstairs, lets out a terrified scream, and goes into convulsions. Dr. Goodricke is summoned; he says she has a serious heart condition and is unlikely to survive, and she dies a few days later. Goodricke certifies the cause of death as a heart aneurism, Jane Gould prepares the body for burial, and Lady Glyde is laid to rest beside her mother at Limmeridge. Three months later, Walter Hartright returns from Honduras, having survived the perils of disease, Indians, and shipwreck foreseen in Marian's dream. He goes immediately to his mother's cottage in Hampstead, where he hears of Laura's death. Several days later, he goes to Limmeridge to visit her grave. While he is weeping there, two women approach him. One is Marian Halcombe, much altered but as strong in character as ever. The other woman is veiled. She approaches the tomb and lifts the veil to reveal the face of none other than Laura Glyde!

### THIRD EPOCH

Walter Hartright now takes up the narrative again. A week after the strange meeting in the Limmeridge churchyard, Walter, Marian, and Laura take a small flat in London and live as brother and sisters under assumed names. Laura is legally dead, and her fortune has been

distributed to Sir Percival and Countess Fosco, as had been their motive all along. They support themselves by drawing and needlework while still seeking to unravel the mystery in which they are caught up.

Hartright then explains to the reader the events to which Marian and Laura had been subjected. Several days after having been confined at Blackwater Park, Marian was told by Mrs. Michelson of Laura's sudden death at St. John's Wood. When she recovered from the shock weeks later, she went to London and sought out William Kyrle, explaining to him her suspicions about her sister's death. He went immediately to St. John's Wood and questioned the Count and Countess, along with the servants and the doctor, and found nothing amiss in their accounts of events, concluding that her illness had unhinged Marian somewhat. She then went to Limmeridge House, and discovered that Mr. Fairlie had heard of Laura's death from his sister, Countess Fosco. One of her letters had warned him that Anne Catherick, now safely returned to the asylum, was claiming to be Lady Glyde, and that should he hear any such gossip, he should immediately discount it. Finding no help from outside sources, Marian decided to have the house at St. John's Wood and its inmates watched, but the surveillance produced no new information; investigation of Mrs. Rubelle likewise produced nothing. Marian then determined to visit Anne Catherick at the asylum. She obtained entrance with some difficulty, and was astounded to discover that the inmate was not Anne Catherick at all, but her sister Laura. She arranged her escape by bribing one of the nurses, then transported her surreptitiously to Limmeridge. Sadly, when she tried to break the news to her uncle, he refused to believe that Laura was still alive, even when he saw her in person, and demanded that the madwoman Anne Catherick leave his house at once! Laura's recollection of events was shaky at best. She remembered that she had been taken to London, but not to St. John's Wood, attended by people she didn't recognize other than Count Fosco, and presumably drugged. The next thing she knew she was in the asylum, wearing the clothes of Anne Catherick. Marian had then rescued her and taken her back to Limmeridge, where her uncle had refused to acknowledge her. As the two women prepared to return to London, a last visit to Mrs. Fairlie's grave had brought them into contact with Walter. The three had then set up housekeeping in London, with no legal standing and fearing constantly the ongoing search for the escaped inmate by Count Fosco and their other enemies.

Walter and Marian realize that Glyde and Fosco will stop at nothing to protect their ill-gotten gains - twenty thousand pounds had come to Sir Percival and ten thousand to Fosco through his wife. They thus go to great extremes to hide their identities. Meanwhile, Walter and Marian quietly gather information from physicians and servants who had been involved in the events of the past few months; this information was incorporated into the narrative at the end of Epoch II. They realize at this point that they have no way of proving Laura's true identity - her appearance is sadly altered as a result of her sufferings, and her memories are confused at best. They do their best to help her recover, and Hartright resumes her drawing lessons.

Walter then determines to visit William Kyrle and seek his assistance. He realizes on the way that Glyde and Fosco know the lawyer's address, and resolves therefore to be cautious in case he is spotted. He tells Kyrle his entire tale, giving him all the evidence at their disposal. The lawyer asserts in the strongest term that they have no legal case, no way of proving Laura's identity, and that, even could they do so, the money could not be retrieved, since Glyde's share would be taken by his creditors and Fosco could easily flee the country. Hartright insists that he has no interest in the money, but only wants to prove Laura's identity and make the criminals pay for what they have done. Kyrle offers his help should he ever obtain better evidence, but doubts

very much whether such a thing is possible, and gives him a letter he had received to deliver to Marian. On the way back to the flat, Walter realizes that he is being followed, but manages to shake the pursuit long before he gets near the apartment. Walter tells Marian about his adventures of the day when he finally gets back. Marian opens the letter, which is from Count Fosco. It assures her that she is safe as long as she remains in seclusion and makes no attempt to pursue the case further, but warns her against trying to contact Hartright, and threatens him with the direst consequences should he ever cross paths with the villains.

Walter and Marian realize that the only missing piece of evidence that can possibly prove Laura's identity is the exact date of her departure from Blackwater Park. If, as they suspect, it was later than the date on the death certificate, they would have a basis for arguing that the woman who died was Anne Catherick rather than Laura Glyde. Walter also notes that, despite its lack of legal power, knowledge of Sir Percival's secret would give them leverage to force the date out of him. Walter thus plans to go to Blackwater the next day to speak to anyone who might be able to confirm the relevant date. The trip is a total failure; Dr. Dawson and the servants are unable to recall the exact date of Lady Glyde's departure. Furthermore, a solicitor appears who treats Hartright rudely in an apparent attempt to provoke a fight that could be used to bring the law down on him. Walter again takes careful precautions on his way home. Now reduced to searching out Sir Percival's secret, Walter asks Marian for any information she has about the baronet. She knows little - his father was physically deformed and anti-social, alienated the neighbors, then left Blackwater Park and spent the rest of his life on the Continent, where Percival was born. When Percival inherited the estate upon the deaths of his parents, he returned to England, and there struck up a friendship with Philip Fairlie, which led to the engagement that initiated the chain of events that make up the story. Walter realizes that the only living person in possession of Sir Percival's secret besides the man himself is Mrs. Catherick, so he determines to contact her and question her. Marian writes a letter to Todd's Corner seeking information about Mrs. Clements, and receives a reply indicating the whereabouts of the only friend of poor Anne Catherick.

The next day, Hartright visits Mrs. Clements in London, and she tells her story from the time of the meeting in the Limmeridge churchyard. They had left Todd's Corner, then lived briefly in London, but had gone out of fear of discovery to Grimsby, a town in the far north of England. There Anne had first developed the heart ailment that was eventually to take her life. Knowing that she was soon to die, Anne insisted on trying one more time to speak to Lady Glyde in person and communicate Sir Percival's secret. Over Mrs. Clements' objections, but in her company, she therefore traveled to Hampshire, where she first spoke to Laura in the boathouse. She soon became ill again, and sent Mrs. Clements with a message asking Laura to come to the house where they were staying. Near the lake, Mrs. Clements had encountered Count Fosco, who presented himself as a medical man who could help the sick woman, and also as the bearer of a message from Lady Glyde. Unfortunately, Mrs. Clements trusted him, and he soon advised her to take Anne to London as soon as possible, where Lady Glyde would come to visit them. She only had to send the Count word of their new address and he would arrange everything. What he arranged, of course, was to get Mrs. Clements out of the house on the pretext of setting up a meeting with Lady Glyde. Madame Fosco, who had come to pick up Mrs. Clements, deserted the poor woman in the middle of London, and when she got back to the house, Anne was gone. Mrs. Clements never saw her again, and still knows nothing of her death.

Hartright continues to question Mrs. Clements about Anne's background and childhood, hoping to get closer to Glyde's terrible secret. He finds that Mrs. Catherick had repeatedly

refused to marry her husband because she felt herself above him, but suddenly had changed her mind, though she still treated him abominably. They moved to Welmingham, where he took a job as parish clerk. Several months before Anne's birth, a nobleman appeared in the vicinity - Sir Percival Glyde. Soon Catherick discovered that he had given expensive gifts to his wife, and the two were caught in private conversation. Catherick struck him, and after neighbors broke up the fight, Catherick had left for America, never to see his wife or daughter again. Strangely, Mrs. Catherick had remained in the neighborhood, vocally denying the neighbors' suspicions that Glyde was the father of little Anne. When Hartright hears this story, he wonders if this might be Sir Percival's secret, but reasons that such a thing is impossible, since the scandal is widely believed in the neighborhood of Welmingham. He concludes that Glyde had deliberately created this scandal in order to hide his real secret, and had continued to pay Mrs. Catherick well to remain in Welmingham and guard that secret. The fact remained, however, that Anne was the child of some unknown man who had never come forward to claim her. At this point, Walter tells Mrs. Clements that Anne is surely dead, and promises to explain all to her at the appropriate time. He then asks for Mrs. Catherick's address in Welmingham, which Mrs. Clements reluctantly provides, first warning him against having anything to do with that awful woman.

When he returns home, he finds that Laura is becoming increasingly depressed because she is contributing nothing to the household is being treated like a child. Walter devises the kindly deception of having her do drawings, which he then is to sell so that she can contribute to the household income. He and Marian then hide the drawings, and he takes money from his own receipts and gives it to Laura as the supposed payments for her work. This cheers her up immeasurably. Walter, over Marian's objections, then goes to Welmingham to find Mrs. Catherick. He finds her rude, haughty, and uncooperative; she has regained her social status after many years of being ostracized by her neighbors, and is proud of her hard-won position in the community. Hartright tells her that her daughter is dead, which seems to faze her not at all, and assures her that he knows that Sir Percival is not Anne's father. She does let slip one sarcastic comment about Sir Percival's descent on his mother's side, but refuses to elaborate, though Walter's reference to the vestry of the church where she and Glyde had been caught whispering so many years before strikes terror into her eyes. She insists that he leave the house, but he is convinced that he has gained valuable insight despite her refusal to impart any information.

When Walter leaves Mrs. Catherick, he sees the same lawyer's clerk he had encountered at Blackwater Park, and knows Glyde is anticipating his every move and having his agents spy on him. His next stop is the vestry of the Old Welmingham Church; he notes that he is followed by the one of the men who had earlier followed him in London and another unknown to him, and takes this as confirmation that he is on the right track. He rouses the parish clerk, a garrulous old man who never seems to stop talking. Walter finally succeeds in obtaining the parish marriage register, and locates the record of the marriage of Sir Percival's parents. The evidence does not point, as he suspected it might, to any lack of propriety; the only peculiar aspect of the record is that it is crammed into a small space at the bottom of a page in the register. He does find that Sir Felix Glyde had married a woman named Cecilia Jane Elster of Knowlesbury. The talkative parish clerk does mention, however, that the son of the previous vestry clerk in Knowlesbury now occupies the same position, and Walter determines next to walk to Knowlesbury to find out more about Sir Percival's mother, the woman who had been spoken of so disrespectfully by Mrs. Catherick.

On the way to Knowlesbury, Hartright is followed by the same two men. At a turn in the road, one of them bumps him, and the other quickly comes up, after which they seize him and accuse him of assault. They take him to the local magistrate and have him incarcerated; the obvious purpose was to eliminate any evidence he might have been able to find while he was cooling his heels in jail. He quickly writes to Dr. Dawson, who lives nearby, and the good doctor bails him out. He then pays a visit to Mr. Wansborough, the vestry clerk of Knowlesbury, whose father had scrupulously kept a duplicate record of the Welmingham register. When Hartright examines the register, he finds that it contains no mention of the marriage of Sir Percival's parents; the entry in the Welmingham register had been forged. Walter now knows Glyde's secret - he is not Sir Percival at all, but an illegitimate son of a nobleman who has no right to the title and property that are his. Walter's first thought is to return to Welmingham and secure the forged register, but, fearing he may again be assaulted by Glyde's henchmen, he purchases a stout cudgel. The decision was a wise one, for on the road back, he is attacked by three men - the spy, the lawyer's clerk, and (unknown to Walter), Sir Percival himself. He disables one and outruns the other two, but they succeed in getting to the village before he is able to navigate the roundabout route he is forced to travel. He arrives in Welmingham to find the parish clerk distraught because his keys have been stolen. The two rush to the church and find it on fire; Sir Percival is trapped inside after having fixed the lock so he would not be interrupted, and his attempt to light a lantern to enable him to find the register has set the vestry ablaze. Hartright makes every effort to save the scoundrel, but by the time he and some villagers are able to batter in the door, Glyde is dead. Thus Walter's first look at the face of his enemy occurs when vengeance is no longer possible. At the inquest the next day he is able to offer little, but realizes that almost all hope of confirming Laura's identity is now gone as a result of Sir Percival's death, as is any way of proving the fraud perpetrated by Glyde since the only documentary proof had gone up in flames.

Later that day, he receives a letter from Mrs. Catherick detailing the history of her relationship with Sir Percival. Glyde had discovered the true state of his parents' relationship from his father prior to old Sir Felix's death, finding that his mother had been previously married in Ireland, had been mistreated, and therefore had been in no position to marry Glyde. Upon the deaths of his parents abroad, he had assumed control of the title and the estate, having no one to contradict him. He still feared discovery, however, when he found that securing a loan on Blackwater Park required a copy of his parents' marriage certificate. Because she was the wife of the parish clerk of Welmingham, Glyde had bribed her with presents to give him access to the vestry. She soon discovered that he was altering the parish records, and he told her the truth in return for more presents and her promise of silence. When the scandal broke, he refused to contradict the rumors of an affair, deciding that false rumors would keep people from seeking the true cause of his behavior. He then promised her a lifetime allowance if she would remain in Welmingham to guard his secret. One day, infuriated at Glyde's supercilious treatment of her, she lashed out at him in the hearing of her daughter, who later told Sir Percival that she knew his secret, and that he must stop referring to her as an idiot. Despite Mrs. Catherick's insistence that Anne knew nothing but the mere existence of the secret, Glyde determined to put her away in an asylum (her mother insisted on a private one), for which he would pay. Mrs. Catherick also informs Hartright in no uncertain terms that her husband is Anne's real father. Thus Walter discovers, too late, that Anne could have told them nothing of the secret he had worked so long to discover. He decides to keep the letter because of its potential value in discovering Anne's real father; he doesn't believe for a minute Mrs. Catherick's claim on that score. The next morning,

he receives an urgent letter from Marian asking him to return to London as soon as possible because she and Laura have been forced to move. Soon the inquest is completed with no public knowledge of the real causes of the tragic events in Welmingham, and the charge of assault against Walter in Knowlesbury is summarily dropped. He learns that the legitimate heir to Blackwater Park, a distant cousin, will now inherit the estate, so he sees no reason to speak further of Sir Percival's forgery, and quickly sets off for London.

When he arrives, Marian tells him of her encounter with Count Fosco. The wily Count had followed Hartright to their dwelling despite his careful precautions, and had contacted the head of the asylum to let him know that his runaway patient had been located. For some odd reason, he does not follow through on his advantage, and neglects to tell the doctor where Laura is living. When Marian confronts him, he admits that his regard for her, which she finds disgusting, was the only reason for his reticence in carrying out his nefarious intentions. He warns her that he will have no such scruples with regard to Hartright, however, and that unless the drawing master drops his investigations immediately, he will find himself in the company of Sir Percival. The move to Fulham puts them in much more pleasant surroundings, much to Laura's enjoyment, but the house is more expensive, thus putting more pressure on Walter to support the little company. Marian soon tells Laura about her husband's death, though she omits all details of the tragedy. Walter fulfills his promise to Mrs. Clements to tell her the details of Anne's death, and also writes to Major Donthorne, who had been Mrs. Catherick's employer before her marriage, during the time when she must have become pregnant with Anne. What he discovers is really no surprise. The Major has no knowledge of Sir Percival Glyde, but during the time in question, Philip Fairlie was a frequent visitor at the Donthorne estate. This evidence, though circumstantial, leaves little doubt about the identity of Anne's father, and clearly explains the resemblance between Laura and Anne. At this point, Walter and Marian decide that the best approach is simply to bide their time and prepare as thoroughly as possible for the inevitable confrontation with Count Fosco, hoping at the same time that their inactivity will lull him into complacency, thinking that they have yielded to his threats.

Four months pass quietly, and Walter strengthens the finances of the household by securing more frequent employment. Meanwhile, it becomes increasingly obvious that the recovery of Laura is producing a return of the love she and Walter had known at Limmeridge. Because of this, their household arrangements are becoming untenable. Walter has a serious conversation with Marian in which he warns her of his intention to pursue Count Fosco in order to gain irrefutable evidence of Laura's identity, of the dangers to which this will expose them all, and of his desire to pursue his relationship with Laura, now that her loss of title and fortune could allow no imputation of any ulterior motives. She agrees wholeheartedly, Laura is overjoyed, and soon the two are married.

After the honeymoon, Walter determines to find out as much as he can about their quarry. In going over the documents and testimonies at his disposal, he formulated the suspicion that Fosco might be a spy. After all, for what other reason would he remain in the country after his conspiracy had accomplished its desired result? Hartright decides to consult his old friend Professor Pesca. First he goes to St. John's Wood to catch a glimpse of the Count, whom he has never seen. He follows him as he walks about the neighborhood and overhears him purchasing a ticket to the opera. Walter knows a scene painter at the theater and is able to obtain seats for himself and Pesca. At the opera, Walter points out Fosco to Pesca, but the latter recognizes neither the man nor the name. Fosco, however, recognizes Pesca, and appears terrified. He

leaves immediately, followed by an unknown stranger who had observed the stares of the two Italians. Walter then accompanies Pesca back to his home, where the little language teacher confesses to Walter that he is a highly-placed member of a revolutionary secret society, committed to stamping out tyranny and promoting democracy in his homeland. The members of the society bear a distinctive tattoo, and are sworn to obedience - even if that obedience means ending the life of a tyrant or traitor. By now Walter is convinced that Fosco is indeed a traitor to that same society, explaining his terror at seeing Pesca. He suspects that Fosco is indeed a spy, explaining his reaction when Laura used that word to describe him at Blackwater Park, and that he is assisted in his nefarious schemes by Mrs. Rubelle. He fears that the Count intends to flee the country, and decides to confront him that very night. To ensure his safety, he writes a sealed letter to Pesca identifying Fosco as a traitor to the secret society and telling him that, if he does not reappear by nine the next morning, the Count must be dealt with accordingly. He then kisses Laura, reassures Marian, and heads for St. John's Wood.

When he arrives at the house of Count Fosco, he sees the same man who had followed the Count out of the theater, but the man seems content to remain outside the grounds. He enters the house and confronts the Count, who is impressed with the steps Hartright has taken to assure his own safety. The two exchange demands - Walter wants a written account of the conspiracy signed by the Count along with documentary evidence proving that Laura was alive after the death certificate for Anne Catherick was signed by the doctor, while Fosco wants assurance that Walter will let him leave London unmolested. He also challenges Walter to a duel somewhere on the Continent after he effects his escape. Fosco writes his account, the letter to Pesca is retrieved and destroyed, and Fosco and the Countess leave in a carriage. Unbeknownst to them, they are followed by the man from the opera house. Fosco's account follows, in which he seeks to justify his behavior, constantly refers to his adoration of Marian, argues that he often carried out the plot in such a way as to minimize the hurt given to others, and insists that he only used his chemical expertise twice - once to pacify Anne Catherick in preparation for the trip to London, and once to render Laura incapable of resisting the change of clothing and trip to the insane asylum. He believes that he deserves credit for not simply murdering Laura instead of conjuring up the complicated exchange-of-identities plot, though he does admit that he would have put Anne out of her misery had she not suddenly died of natural causes. He also admits that the only flaw in his wonderful plan - the fact that Anne died the day before Laura left Blackwater Park - had been discovered and focused on by Hartright.

Walter next goes to the livery stable from which Fosco had acquired the conveyance that had transported Laura from the train station. The records indicate that the trip had occurred on July 26<sup>th</sup>, the date after the death certificate for "Laura, Lady Glyde" was signed, and the driver clearly remembers the passengers, both Fosco and Lady Glyde. Walter obtains the necessary documents and takes them to Kyrle, the solicitor, who now has in hand the written evidence he requires. The two take them to Limmeridge House and convince Frederick Fairlie, though he is reluctant to be bothered, as usual. Laura then is taken to Cumberland, where a large party convenes to cheer the return from the dead of one they thought was gone. Soon after, the inscription on the gravestone is corrected, and Anne Catherick is given her wish to rest by the side of the kindly woman who had married her father.

Walter is called to Paris to fulfill a commission, but before he goes, he and Laura decide that they are being selfish in keeping Marian in their home, and that she should be given the freedom to pursue a life of her own. She adamantly refuses, insisting that the only life she desires

is to be with her dear sister and her husband, and to be a beloved aunt to their children. Walter takes Pesca with him on the trip to Paris, and one day when he returns to the hotel, he finds Pesca in conversation with the mysterious stranger who had followed Fosco home from the opera house. Pesca has no wish to share the conversation, but Walter soon discovers that Fosco, who had turned traitor to the secret society of which Pesca and the stranger were a part, had been found murdered in the Seine, with a knife wound in his heart and the letter T, for “traitor,” obliterating the tattoo that identified the members of the society. For the rest of her life, the Countess leaves flowers at his grave, and even writes a laudatory biography of a man whose “life was one long assertion of the rights of the aristocracy and the sacred principles of Order, and [who] died a martyr to his cause.”

The next spring, Walter and Marian have a child, a little boy they christen Walter, to the delight of all who love them. While Walter is pursuing a commission in Ireland, he receives a cryptic letter from Laura telling him to meet them at Limmeridge House. He arrives expecting trouble from Laura’s uncle, but finds instead that the old man has died, and that their child is now the heir of Limmeridge House and all that pertains to it.

### **NOTABLE QUOTATIONS**

“You don’t suspect me of doing anything wrong, do you? I have done nothing wrong. I have met with an accident - I am very unfortunate in being here alone so late. Why do you suspect me of doing wrong?” (Anne, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.3, p.48)

“You must please both of us, Mr. Hartright, or please neither of us.” (Marian, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.5, p.61)

“The woman who first gives life, light, and form to our shadowy conceptions of beauty, fills a void in our spiritual nature that has remained unknown to us till she appeared.” (Hartright, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.7, p.75-76)

“In those few words she unconsciously gave me the key to her whole character: to that generous trust in others which, in her nature, grew innocently out of the sense of her own truth.” (Hartright, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.7, p.78)

“For aught I knew to the contrary, the whole future of Laura Fairlie’s life might be determined, for good or for evil, by my winning or losing the confidence of the forlorn creature who stood trembling by her mother’s grave.” (Hartright, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.12, p.119)

“If ever sorrow and suffering set their profaning marks on the youth and beauty of Miss Fairlie’s face, then, and then only, Anne Catherick and she would be the twin-sisters of chance resemblance, the living reflections of one another.” (Hartright, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.12, p.120)

“You know how I love your child, for your sake! Oh, Mrs. Fairlie! Mrs. Fairlie! tell me how to save her. Be my darling and my mother once more, and tell me what to do for the best.” (Anne Catherick, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.12, p.127)

“Sir Percival Glyde shall remove that doubt, Mr. Hartright - or Laura Fairlie shall never be his wife.” (Marian, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.13, p.138)

“I have heard and seen more than you think. Your conduct tonight has made me your friend for life.” (Marian, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.14, p.147)

“But if a time should come, when the devotion of my whole heart and soul and strength will give you a moment’s happiness, or spare you a moment’s sorrow, will you try to remember the poor drawing-master who has taught you?” (Hartright, Epoch I, Narrative 1, ch.14, p.149)

“As I drove away to the station I felt as if I could cheerfully do anything to promote the interests of Sir Percival Glyde - anything in the world, except drawing the marriage settlement of his wife.” (Gilmore, Epoch I, Narrative 2, ch.2, p.169)

“No daughter of mine should have been married to any man alive under such a settlement as I was compelled to make for Laura Fairlie.” (Gilmore, Epoch I, Narrative 2, ch.4, p.184)

“I have heard, and I believe it, that the fondest and truest of all affections is the affection which a woman ought to bear to her husband. When our engagement began that affection was mine to give, if I could, and yours to win, if you could. Will you pardon me, and spare me, Sir Percival, if I acknowledge that it is so no longer?” (Laura, Epoch I, Narrative 3, ch.1, p.191-192).

“Every word she had spoken had innocently betrayed her purity and truth to a man who thoroughly understood the priceless value of a pure and true woman. Her own noble conduct had been the hidden enemy, throughout, of all the hopes she had trusted to it.” (Marian, Epoch I, Narrative 3, ch.1, p.193)

“Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace - they drag us away from our parents’ love and our sisters’ friendship - they take us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel. And what does the best of them give us in return?” (Marian, Epoch I, Narrative 3, ch.2, p.203)

“His Laura! I am as little able to realise the idea which those two words convey - my mind feels almost as dulled and stunned by it - as if writing of her marriage were like writing of her death.” (Marian, Epoch I, Narrative 3, ch.2, p.207)

“Laura has preserved, far more perfectly than most people do later in life, the child’s subtle faculty of knowing a friend by instinct.” (Marian, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.1, p.224)

“I have always heard that truly wise men are truly good men, and have a horror of crime.” (Laura, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.3, p.254)

“The hiding of a crime, or the detection of a crime, what is it? A trial of skill between the police on one side, and the individual on the other. When the criminal is a brutal, ignorant fool, the police in nine cases out of ten win. When the criminal is a resolute, educated, highly-intelligent man, the police in nine cases out of ten lose. If the police win, you generally hear all about it. If the police lose, you generally hear nothing. And on this tottering foundation you build up your comfortable moral maxim that Crime causes its own detection! Yes - all the crime you know of. And what of the rest?” (Fosco, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.3, p.256)

“I am a citizen of the world, and I have met, in my time, with so many different sorts of virtue, that I am puzzled, in my old age, to say which is the right sort, and which is the wrong.” (Fosco, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.3, p.256-257)

“Thank God for your poverty - it has made you your own mistress, and has saved you from the lot that has fallen on me.” (Laura, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.5, p.280)

“My hand had pointed the way which led the man my sister loved, step by step, far from his country and his friends. Between those two young hearts I had stood, to sunder them for ever, the one from the other, and his life and her life lay wasted before me alike in witness of the deed. I had done this, and done it for Sir Percival Glyde.” (Marian, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.5, p.284)

“Not know you were married? I am here *because* you are married. I am here to make atonement to you, before I meet your mother in the world beyond the grave.” (Anne, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.6, p.300)

“I felt the ominous future coming close, chilling me with an unutterable awe, forcing on me the conviction of an unseen design in the long series of complications which had now fastened round us.” (Marian, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.6, p.305)

“Any woman who is sure of her own wits is a match at any time for a man who is not sure of his own temper.” (Marian, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.8, p.332)

“My good friend, you are on the edge of your domestic precipice, and if I let you give the women one other chance, on my sacred word of honour they will push you over it!” (Fosco, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.9, p.340)

“Here is your position. If your wife lives, you pay those bills with her signature to the parchment. If your wife dies, you pay them with her death.” (Fosco, Epoch II, Narrative 1, ch.9, p.350)

“I believe in my soul that the hand of God was pointing their way back to them, and that the most innocent and the most afflicted of His creatures was chosen in that dread moment to see it.” (Hartright, Epoch III, Narrative 1, ch.2, p.451)

“There shall be no money motive, no idea of personal advantage in the service I mean to render to Lady Glyde. She has been cast out as a stranger from the house in which she was born - a lie which records her death has been written on her mother’s tomb - and there are two men, alive and unpunished, who are responsible for it. That house shall open again to receive her in the presence of every soul who followed the false funeral to the grave - that lie shall be publicly erased from the tombstone by the authority of the head of the family, and those two men shall answer for their crime to ME, though the justice that sits in tribunals is powerless to pursue them. I have given my life to that purpose, and, alone as I stand, if God spares me, I will accomplish it.” (Hartright, Epoch III, Narrative 1, ch.4, p.465-466)

“Had Sir Percival, by any chance, courted the suspicion that was wrong for the sake of diverting himself from some other suspicion that was right?” (Hartright, Epoch III, Narrative 1, ch.7, p.492)

“Warn Mr. Hartright! He has a man of brains to deal with, a man who snaps his big fingers at the laws and conventions of society, when he measures himself with ME.” (Fosco, Epoch III, Narrative 3, ch.2, p.568)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White*, the author creates an epistolary novel - one consisting of a series of documents supposedly penned by different characters in the story, offering their eyewitness accounts and personal interpretations of events. In order to make such a novel successful, the author must have the ability to speak convincingly in different voices. Evaluate the effectiveness of Collins in managing this difficult task. Choose three characters who contribute to the novel other than Walter Hartright and Marian Halcombe and discuss the ways in which their voices differ and the extent to which those voices fit the characters as they are portrayed in the story.
2. In Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White*, the story is told by many narrators. To what extent are these narrators trustworthy? Is the reader encouraged to accept what they say at face value, or to bring his critical faculties to bear on the testimony thus presented? Give specific examples from the novel to support your conclusions.
3. In Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White*, the author created one of the strongest female characters in Victorian fiction. In what ways does the portrayal of Marian Halcombe contradict the perception of women in Victorian England? In what ways do the words she speaks demonstrate Collins’ awareness of the cultural challenge his creation presents?

4. In Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Marian Halcombe speaks these words: "Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace - they drag us away from our parents' love and our sisters' friendship - they take us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel. And what does the best of them give us in return?" Do these lines indicate a feminist perspective on the part of the author, or do they simply constitute a critique of the attitude toward woman common in Victorian England? Would modern feminists find comfort and encouragement in the novel? Why or why not?
5. Marian Halcombe, the central female character in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, is believed to have been based on Mary Anne Evans, better known as George Eliot, a strong woman who was also, as Collins says of his protagonist, remarkably ugly. Compare and contrast Marian with Eliot's most autobiographical heroine, Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*. What qualities do the two have in common? In what important ways do they differ? Be sure to use specifics from both novels in answering the question.
6. During his lifetime, the novels of Wilkie Collins were as popular and lucrative as those of his mentor and friend Charles Dickens. Modern critics have not always been kind to the creator of the Sensation Novel, however. Why do you think this is so? Does popularity automatically generate skepticism among critics, who think that anything enjoyed by the general populace must be of inferior quality? To what extent does Collins' best novel, *The Woman in White*, deserve to be considered a classic? Support your conclusion by commenting on qualities such as plot, characterization, description of settings, and dialogue.
7. Count Fosco, the villain in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, considers himself to be above the law and immune to societal restrictions. The author himself flaunted social standards, largely in his sexual escapades. To what extent does the author picture Fosco as an admirable character? Are his strength of character and independence to be admired, despite his wicked behavior? What exactly is Collins trying to say by making his leading villain attractive in so many ways? Discuss the portrayal of the Count and its significance for the themes of the novel.
8. On several occasions in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Count Fosco is compared to Napoleon. Though the analogy refers to his facial features, to what extent does it also say something about his character? Use what you know about Napoleon Bonaparte, your knowledge of the attitude the British had toward him, and details from the novel in constructing your answer.
9. Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* were planned at the same time and serialized in the same magazine. Both picture foreigners in a less-than-positive light. Compare and contrast the portrayal of inhabitants of the Continent, whether the French in Dickens' classic or the Italians in Collins' mystery. Remember to consider not only Madame Defarge and Count Fosco, but also Charles Darnay and Professor Pesca in your analysis.

10. Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* were planned at the same time and serialized in the same magazine. Both use the similar appearance of two characters as a central plot device. Evaluate the effectiveness of this technique. To what extent is it credible? Which novel, in your opinion, uses it more effectively? Why do you think so? Support your answer with specifics from both novels.
11. In Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright is an artist and Laura Fairlie is a musician, and the two are drawn to one another during time spent at the easel and the piano. Marian Halcombe, on the other hand, has absolutely no artistic talent by her own admission, and is not at all a romantic figure with the possible exception of Count Fosco's attraction to her, and even that seems more related to her mind than anything else. Discuss the relationship between art and love in the novel. Is the appreciation of art essential to a heart of love? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
12. The protagonists in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright and Marian Halcombe, engage in considerable deception in their efforts to protect Laura, solve Sir Percival's mystery, and get revenge on Count Fosco. Is this deception justified? Be sure to use both details from the novel and principles from Scripture in answering the question.
13. Whom do you consider the greater villain in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Sir Percival Glyde or Count Fosco? Support your conclusion with details from the novel, being sure to consider incidents where both men seem to soften or have second thoughts about their conspiracy.
14. Both Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* deal with the evils and necessities of marrying for money. Though both authors clearly do not like the practice, how do they differ in their views of it? Use specifics from both novels to answer the question.
15. Both Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* deal with the dangers of depending on first impressions of people, and part of the effectiveness of both plots depends on the villains initially creating positive impressions of themselves. Discuss how this technique on the part of the authors is carried out in the portrayals of George Wickham, Sir Percival Glyde, and Count Fosco.
16. Throughout Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright is praised by others for his integrity. How does he demonstrate this integrity in his relationships with other characters and through his actions? Are his actions congruent with biblical values, or are they more a reflection of Victorian standards of behavior?
17. Discuss the use of foreshadowing in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*. Choose three specific examples of the technique and show how they influence the reader's interest in and approach to the story.

18. Early in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright encounters Laura Fairlie and falls in love. His comment about this in retrospect is, "The woman who first gives life, light, and form to our shadowy conceptions of beauty, fills a void in our spiritual nature that has remained unknown to us till she appeared." Discuss the credibility of the reasons why Walter falls in love with Laura? To what extent do aesthetics and appearance control the early stages of their relationship? Does the novel give any indication of a sound basis for their love? Use details from the novel to support your conclusions.
19. Shortly before Walter Hartright is forced to leave Limmeridge House in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, he says to Laura Fairlie, "But if a time should come, when the devotion of my whole heart and soul and strength will give you a moment's happiness, or spare you a moment's sorrow, will you try to remember the poor drawing-master who has taught you?" Compare this statement with similar words spoken by Sidney Carton to Lucie Manette in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. How do the two promises differ, both in terms of the contexts in which they are spoken and the roles they play in the respective plots?
20. In Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Laura Fairlie is portrayed as a very naive character, and thus as a foil for her half-sister Marian Halcombe. Is her naivete pictured more as a weakness or as an admirable trait? In answering the question, be sure to draw appropriate contrasts with the qualities of her sister.
21. To what extent does Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* contain a criticism of the Victorian attitude and practice with regard to mental illness? Cite specific incidents and quotations to support your conclusions.
22. In Epoch II of Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Marian Halcombe, Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde, and Count Fosco have a discussion about crime, and good and evil in general. Discuss the implications for the worldview of the author of this conversation. Whose views does he favor? Why do you think so? What does he believe to be the relationship between wisdom and virtue? Support your conclusions with specifics from the dialogue, and from elsewhere in the novel.
23. In Epoch II of Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Marian Halcombe, Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde, and Count Fosco have a discussion about crime, and good and evil in general. Count Fosco argues, "The hiding of a crime, or the detection of a crime, what is it? A trial of skill between the police on one side, and the individual on the other. When the criminal is a brutal, ignorant fool, the police in nine cases out of ten win. When the criminal is a resolute, educated, highly-intelligent man, the police in nine cases out of ten lose. If the police win, you generally hear all about it. If the police lose, you generally hear nothing. And on this tottering foundation you build up your comfortable moral maxim that Crime causes its own detection! Yes - all the crime you know of. And what of the rest?" How does the Count demonstrate that he really believes what he says? Does the author agree with his villain's cynicism about law enforcement? Why or why not?

24. In the lengthy discussion in the boathouse in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Count Fosco argues for cultural relativism as a means of justifying moral relativism and as a criticism of British society. Which of these do you think was more central to the point the author was making? From a biblical standpoint, was Fosco right in arguing that cultural relativism and moral relativism are inevitably linked? Why or why not?
25. At one point in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Laura Fairlie says to her sister Marian, "Thank God for your poverty - it has made you your own mistress, and has saved you from the lot that has fallen on me." To what extent does the author argue for the endemic evil of riches in the novel? To what extent is his view on the subject biblical? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel and from Scripture.
26. At one point in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Marian Halcombe says, "I felt the ominous future coming close, chilling me with an unutterable awe, forcing on me the conviction of an unseen design in the long series of complications which had now fastened round us." Discuss the role of Fate or Providence in the development of the novel. Does the author consider the controlling forces that direct the lives of the characters to be personal or impersonal? What makes you think so? Use specifics from the story to support your conclusions.
27. Compare and contrast the roles played by dreams in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Consider how the dreams in the novels relate to the plots and characters, and the extent to which they are essential to the themes of the novels.
28. Discuss the theme of revenge as it appears in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*. Does the author consider revenge to be justifiable? Why or why not? Evaluate the extent to which the author's approach to the subject is biblical. Be sure to consider the ambivalent attitude of Walter Hartright on the subject in preparing your arguments.
29. "Nerves" play an important role in the characterizations of Frederick Fairlie in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Both characters are caricatures, extreme in their self-absorption, yet both play central roles in the plots of the novels in which they are involved. Compare and contrast the two authors' treatments of hypochondria and self-absorption. Consider the ways in which readers are intended to react to the two characters in your analysis.
30. In both Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, significant characters travel abroad for much of the middle of the story, are thought to be lost, then return changes men. Consider the symbolic significance of travel outside Britain to the formation of character and the establishment of manhood in the two novels. How do the changes in the two men contribute to the plots of the two novels, as well as to their social criticism? Be sure to account for the differing destinations and experiences of the two romantic figures in your analysis of social criticism.

31. Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* is considered the first of a genre of Victorian fiction called the Sensation Novel. In what sense is it sensational? Consider both the gothic elements of the story and the nineteenth-century understanding of "sensation" in answering the question.
32. Critic H.L. Mansel excoriated the new genre of Sensation Novels by describing it as "preaching to the nerves instead of the judgment," and argued that such popular fiction would never outlive the "current season." He feared that it pandered to the lowest instincts and desires among readers, and sincerely wished that it would disappear from the contemporary scene. The main target of Mansel's criticism was Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, the first of the Sensation Novels. Do you consider his judgment to be justified? Why or why not? In either case, what accounts for the longevity of a work that Mansel, writing in 1863, believed would soon be forgotten?
33. Discuss the extent to which Count Fosco, the villain in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, knows himself. He is constantly telling others about his personal qualities and character, but are these self-focused conversations marks of candor or attempts at manipulation? Do his descriptions of himself, both for the benefit of others and for the purposes of the narrative, ring true? Why or why not? Be sure to use specific quotations to support your analysis.
34. Discuss the extent to which setting plays a role in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*. Consider the major locations in which the story takes place - Limmeridge House, Blackwater Park, and St. John's Wood - and evaluate how the differences in these locales affect both plot and character.
35. In Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, the author makes extensive use of doubling - two villains, two heroines, two madwomen, two houses in which most of the action occurs. What do you think is the purpose for this literary approach? Compare and contrast the use of doubling here with a similar approach in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, which was published in the same magazine at around the same time.
36. In Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Marian Halcombe possesses many male character traits, while Frederick Fairlie is portrayed as distressingly feminine. What do you think Collins is trying to communicate through these characters that violate gender stereotypes? Is he opposed to any traits being associated with gender at all, or is he instead deliberately making these characters unusual for the purpose of his story? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
37. Discuss the view of the family found in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*. The novel contains few if any intact families. Why would Collins have chosen to structure his story in this way? How do these broken families contribute to matters of plot and characterization? Be specific.