The Woman in White

Before Reading

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES (PAGE 108)

ACTIVITY 1 BEFORE READING
Open answers. Encourage discussion.

ACTIVITY 2 BEFORE READING
Several answers are possible for each gap. Suggestions: In thrillers of this kind, the mystery is usually solved in the end, though often in an unexpected way. The good characters have to struggle against the forces of evil, but they learn from their mistakes, and usually live happily ever after. The wicked characters, who are sometimes more interesting than the good ones, rarely succeed in their aims and are often punished by death or imprisonment.

While Reading

PART ONE, CHAPTERS 1 TO 3 WHILE READING
Walter came to Limmeridge House as a drawing teacher to Laura and Marian, who were half-sisters. Laura's family name was Fairlie – a name mentioned by the strange woman in white that Walter had met in London. She had told him that she came from Hampshire but had once been very happy at Limmeridge House. He told Marian this story, and she discovered from old letters of her mother's that the woman in white was probably Anne Catherick.

A few months later Marian advised Walter to leave, as she had realized he was in love with Laura, who was already promised in marriage to Sir Percival Glyde, a Baronet from Hampshire. But before Walter left, an unsigned letter came for Laura, warning her not to marry Sir Percival, and Walter believed the letter had been sent by Anne Catherick, whom he found that evening, cleaning Mrs Fairlie's grave in the churchyard.

BEFORE READING PART TWO (CHAPTERS 4 TO 8)
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers.

PART TWO, CHAPTERS 4 TO 8 WHILE READING
1 Laura told Sir Percival that she loved another person, but Sir Percival refused to release her from the engagement.
2 The marriage agreement was very much to Sir Percival's advantage.
3 Sir Percival tried to get hold of Laura's money by telling her to put her signature on a document which she was prevented from reading.
4 Count Fosco knew that Marian had written to Mr Kyrle because he took her letter out of the post-bag, read it, and put it back.
5 When Laura met Anne Catherick at the lake, Anne said that she knew a secret about Sir Percival that he was afraid of.
6 Sir Percival threatened to lock Laura up until she confessed the truth about what Anne Catherick had told her.
7 While hiding on the verandah roof, Marian heard Count Fosco and Sir Percival discussing how Laura's death would solve the problem of their debt.
8 Laura went to the Count's house in London because she did not know Marian was still at Blackwater Park / because she had been tricked into believing that Marian had gone to Limmeridge.

BEFORE READING PART THREE (CHAPTERS 9 TO 15)
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that the true answers are 1a, 1b, 2a, 2c.

PART THREE, CHAPTERS 9 TO 13 WHILE READING
1 Marian, asking for God's help for Walter, who is about to get the shock of his life when he sees Laura alive, standing by her own grave.
2 Marian, speaking to Walter, about the moment when she found Laura in the asylum.
3 Mr Fairlie, speaking to Marian, about Laura, who he believes to be Anne Catherick, when Marian and Laura went up to Limmeridge after Laura's escape from the asylum (reported by Marian to Walter).
4 Count Fosco, writing to Marian, threatening action if Walter tries to interfere with him.
5 Walter, speaking to Marian, about the precise date of Laura's journey from Blackwater Park to London.
6 Mrs Clements, speaking to Walter, about Madame Fosco, who deceived Mrs Clements into leaving the house, so that Anne Catherick could be kidnapped and taken to the Count's house.
7 Mrs Catherick, speaking to Walter, about her daughter Anne.
8 Mrs Catherick, speaking to Walter, about Sir Percival's parents, hinting at a disreputable secret (i.e. that they were not married and so Sir Percival was not his father's legal heir).
9 The church clerk, speaking to Walter, about the lock in the vestry door, which prevented Sir Percival from escaping from the fire.
10 Mrs Catherick, writing to Walter, explaining that Sir Percival wanted people to believe that he was having an affair with Mrs Catherick, to keep them from suspecting that he had been illegally changing the marriage register.
11 Marian, writing from London to Walter in Hampshire, giving the new address (the move having been caused by the Count’s threatening visit).

12 Walter, speaking to Marian, about not being in a hurry to challenge the Count, so that the Count will believe his threats have worked.

13 Marian, speaking to Walter, showing her affection for him and approval of his plan to marry Laura, before she goes away to send Laura to him.

14 Laura, speaking to Walter, about finally being able to admit to their love openly.

BEFORE READING CHAPTERS 14 AND 15
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers.

After Reading

ACTIVITY 1 AFTER READING

1 Sir Percival, thinking about the page in the marriage register, with the false entry of his parents’ marriage, which he had written in himself many years before. He is in the vestry of the church at Welmingham, about to tear the page out, but he knocks over his lamp, starting a fire in which he is burnt to death.

2 The woman in white (Anne Catherick), thinking about and eventually recognizing Walter Hartright, who has just approached her in Limmeridge churchyard, where she has been cleaning Mrs Fairlie’s grave.

3 Mr Fairlie, thinking about Marian and, as he assumes or chooses to assume, Anne Catherick. In fact, it is Laura, who has just been rescued by Marian from the asylum, brought up to Limmeridge House, and in to see Mr Fairlie – who refuses to recognize her.

4 Laura, noticing the note that Anne Catherick had left her, hidden in a hole in the sand by the boat-house at the lake. Anne Catherick had failed to turn up for their arranged meeting.

5 Walter, thinking about Laura Fairlie, in the garden at Limmeridge House, when Marian takes him to find his other pupil. This is the first time Walter sets eyes on Laura, shortly after his arrival at Limmeridge.

6 Marian, thinking about Walter, who had left the house the previous evening to go and do battle with the Count. As part of his bargain with the Count, Walter is obliged to stay all night at his house and does not return home till after nine in the morning.

7 Count Fosco, thinking about Sir Percival, who has just lost his temper when trying to make his wife Laura sign a document she is not allowed to read. The Count is aware that Marian is now quite suspicious, and realizes he must stop Sir Percival from making matters even worse.

ACTIVITY 2 AFTER READING
Students can complete this conversation how they wish. These are suggested responses.

COUNT FOSCO: I have it, Percival – the perfect plan! Within a few weeks you will be a widower, and able to pay all your debts!

SIR PERCIVAL: If you’re talking about my wife’s death, forget it!

COUNT FOSCO: Ah, but suppose it isn’t actually your wife who dies, but another woman in her place.

SIR PERCIVAL: Another woman? What are you talking about?

COUNT FOSCO: Anne Catherick. If she changed places with your wife, who would tell the difference? You say that they are very alike.

SIR PERCIVAL: Yes, they do look very similar. But how the devil are you going to get them to change places?

COUNT FOSCO: We can do it at my house in London. We need to persuade Lady Glyde to spend a night there on her way to Limmeridge.

SIR PERCIVAL: But you haven’t got a house in London. And why should my wife want to go to Limmeridge?

COUNT FOSCO: A house in London can easily be arranged. And if we deceived your wife into believing that Marian Halcombe had gone to Limmeridge, wouldn’t she want to follow her at once? She and Marian are very close.

SIR PERCIVAL: Ah, Marian . . . yes, I see. So, you get Lady Glyde to London. What happens then?

COUNT FOSCO: She becomes Anne Catherick. I know some medical men who can be persuaded to certify her as mentally ill, and we return her to the asylum from which Anne Catherick escaped.

SIR PERCIVAL: But won’t the asylum release her when she tells them who she really is?

COUNT FOSCO: Who will believe her? She will be frightened and confused, she will be wearing clothes with Anne Catherick’s name on them, she will be just another madwoman, claiming to be someone she isn’t.

SIR PERCIVAL: Mm, I hope you’re right. And Anne Catherick? You say you persuaded this friend of hers, Mrs Clements, when you met her at the lake, to take her back to London?

COUNT FOSCO: Yes, and they will wait there for a message from Lady Glyde. Then, once Anne Catherick is in London, it will be an easy matter to bring her to my house, where she will become Lady Glyde. And because of her heart disease, she is likely to die at any time.

SIR PERCIVAL: She has heart disease? How do you know that?

COUNT FOSCO: I learnt that useful fact from her friend, Mrs Clements. So, my dear friend, is this not a clever plan?
Sir Percival: Yes, yes, very clever. But suppose her heart disease is not very advanced – suppose she doesn’t die, Fosco? What then?

Count Fosco: What a sad life this Anne Catherick leads! Naturally, I will give her a happy release from this prison we call life.

**ACTIVITY 3** AFTER READING

Acceptable answers to these cloze passages are any words that have an appropriate meaning and fit the grammar of the sentence. Students might like to check each other’s work and discuss alternative answers. Some alternatives are given below.

1. **Count Fosco to Mr Fairlie**
   
   … you will be glad to know Anne Catherick has been found and taken back to the asylum. She is still very disturbed mentally, and is now claiming she is not Anne Catherick at all, but Lady Glyde, your niece who died recently. You should be aware of this, in case she escapes again and tries (attempts) to annoy you or other members of Lady Glyde’s family.

2. **Mr Kyrle to Marian Halcombe**
   
   … as I was very puzzled (worried) yesterday to receive a letter addressed to me – I recognized your handwriting on the envelope – which contained nothing but a plain piece of paper without a word on it. I do hope there is nothing wrong, and I look forward to hearing from you again in the very near future.

3. **Madame Fosco to Mrs Michelson**
   
   … I write to you with some very sad news about my niece. She was taken seriously ill when she arrived at our house in London, and she died the next day, very suddenly. It has been a great shock for everybody. Please break the news as gently as you can to her sister, who must still be very weak from her illness.

4. **Marian Halcombe to Mr Fairlie**
   
   … I fear the situation between her and Sir Percival is getting worse day by day. Laura really needs to escape from him, and you must (should) write to invite her to Limmeridge. It is very important that you do this without delay, as I am afraid (sure) something terrible will happen if Laura does not leave here soon.

5. **Sir Percival to Count Fosco**
   
   Blackwater Park, 25th July. Everything has gone according to plan. Lady Glyde insists on following her sister to her uncle’s house, and will be taking the train to London tomorrow, on the 26th July. I told her you will meet her at the station, and that she must stay at your house for the night.

**Order in story and explanation of circumstances**

4. This letter from Marian begins the chain of deception that takes Laura to London. Marian’s letter is received by Mr Fairlie, who replies to it, expressing reluctance and asking Marian to come to Limmeridge to talk it over with him. Marian never reads this reply as she is ill, but the letter is opened and used by Sir Percival and Fosco in the deception of Laura.

2. The letter from Marian (giving details of Sir Percival’s violent behaviour) that has mystified and alarmed Mr Kyrle had been given to Fanny, Laura’s maid, who was to post it to Mr Kyrle in London. However, Madame Fosco visited Fanny at the village inn, drugged her, stole the letter from Fanny’s dress, and substituted a plain piece of paper. Mr Kyrle receives no reply from Marian (who is now ill), and then writes to Mr Fairlie, who declines to help.

5. This letter from Sir Percival is the most important one for the plot, because it gives the date when Laura actually travelled to London – the 26th July. The false Lady Glyde (Anne Catherick) had died in London on the 25th July, so the death certificate was dated on a day when Laura was alive in Hampshire. This letter is given by Count Fosco, as part of the bargain, to Walter, who uses it to help prove Laura’s real identity.

3. This letter from Madame Fosco, announcing Laura’s death to Marian via Mrs Michelson, is undated, and carefully avoids mentioning any specific dates to do with Laura’s arrival in London, illness or death.

1. Count Fosco’s letter to Mr Fairlie is the final part of the plot, and is intended to prevent any curiosity or investigation if Laura, now locked up in the asylum as the mad Anne Catherick, tries to prove her identity.

**ACTIVITY 4** AFTER READING

Open answers. Encourage discussion.