

TEXTE 1

[The scene takes place circa 1870.]

After a pause Madame Olenska broke out with unexpected vehemence:

"I want to be free; I want to wipe out all the past."

"I understand that."

Her face warmed. "Then you'll help me?"

"First—" he hesitated—"perhaps I ought to know a little more."

She seemed surprised. "You know about my husband—my life with him?"

He made a sign of assent.

"Well—then—what more is there? In this country are such things tolerated?

I'm a Protestant—our church does not forbid divorce in such cases."

"Certainly not."

They were both silent again, and Archer felt the spectre of Count Olenski's letter grimacing hideously between them. The letter filled only half a page, and was just what he had described it to be in speaking of it to Mr. Letterblair: the vague charge of an angry blackguard. But how much truth was behind it? Only Count Olenski's wife could tell.

"I've looked through the papers you gave to Mr. Letterblair," he said at length. "Well—can there be anything more abominable?"

"No."

She changed her position slightly, screening her eyes with her lifted hand.

"Of course you know," Archer continued, "that if your husband chooses to fight the case—as he threatens to—"

"Yes—?"

"He can say things—things that might be unpl—might be disagreeable to you: say them publicly, so that they would get about, and harm you even if—"

"If—?"

"I mean: no matter how unfounded they were."

She paused for a long interval; so long that, not wishing to keep his eyes on her shaded face, he had time to imprint on his mind the exact shape of her other hand, the one on her knee, and every detail of the three rings on her fourth and fifth fingers; among which, he noticed, a wedding ring did not appear.

"What harm could such accusations, even if he made them publicly, do me here?"

It was on his lips to exclaim: "My poor child—far more harm than anywhere else!" Instead, he answered, in a voice that sounded in his ears like Mr. Letterblair's: "New York society is a very small world compared with the one you've lived in. And it's ruled, in spite of appearances, by a few people with—well, rather oldfashioned ideas."

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Answer

a) Focus

- "I was

- "if you

- "say [

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b) Main

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c) De

word

PRIVATE SPACE AND PUBLIC SPACE

She said nothing, and he continued: "Our ideas about marriage and divorce are particularly old-fashioned. Our legislation favours divorce—our social customs don't."

40 "Never?"

"Well—not if the woman, however injured, however irreproachable, has appearances in the least degree against her, has exposed herself by any unconventional action to—to offensive insinuations—"

45 She drooped her head a little lower, and he waited again, intensely hoping for a flash of indignation, or at least a brief cry of denial. None came.

Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, 1920

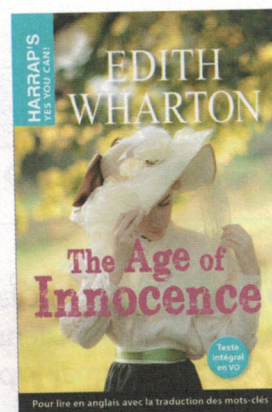
COMPRÉHENSION DE L'ÉCRIT

Answer the following questions in English, using your own words:

a) Focus on the following three clues:

- "I want to be free" (l.2)
- "if your husband chooses to fight the case" (ll.20-21)
- "say [...] things that might be [...] disagreeable to you" (l.23)

What do they reveal about the current relation between Madame Olenska and her husband?



They have a bad relationship and she wants to divorce her husband but fears or is unaware of the risk she is taking and the impact it might have on her life.

b) Madame Olenska's decision troubles Archer. In your own words, explain how the society could react to her actions.

Her decision troubles Archer because Olenska's Husband is vice count and is so powerful that the impact could doom his wife's life forever.

The society and the social customs in which they live might find her behavior unexceptionable because she is supposed to love her husband and stay with him even if she doesn't like him.

c) Describe Madame Olenska's attitude (words pronounced, postures and reactions to Archer's words). What does it say about her need to separate from her husband?

She is desperate to leave her husband, to the point that it could ruin her whole life.

EXPRESSION ÉCRITE

**Vous traiterez en anglais et en 120 mots au moins
l'un des trois sujets suivants au choix :**

a) You are Madame Olenska. You write back to your husband, Count Olenski, to tell him that you are not afraid of him and that you are ready to face the possible consequences of a divorce.

Dear Count Olenski,
This is not an easy letter to write. I wanted to inform you that after long and difficult reflection and after much soul searching, I have come to the conclusion that I have no other option but to ask you for a divorce.
I realise that there might be major repercussions, but I am ready to face the consequences of my actions. The reason of my divorce is not fear, it is because I can no longer abide your selfish and cruel attitude. I have had to choose between saving my sanity or forever losing my self respect. It is true that I will miss the big receptions, the privileges, the jewellery, and all the luxury I had when I was by your side.
I Hope that you will understand my choice and come to the conclusion that it the best solution for both of us. I truly hope that we can come to an agreeable solution that avoids embarrassment for both of us.
Yours sincerely, Madame Olenska.

b) Archer and Madame Olenska discusses the potential reactions from the New York society, in case Madame Olenska gets to divorce her husband. Archer tries to encourage her to complete the process but remains protective of her. Write their conversation.

c) Would you be ready to make sacrifices in your social or professional life in order to feel better in your personal life? Justify your answer with at least one example.

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