***Woman in White***

***Part 1***

***Section 1***

***Chapter 12***

***Short Summary:***

Walter and Marian head south of Limmeridge House to the nearest village, where the schools were founded by the late Mrs. Fairlie. They arrive at one school and overhear the schoolmaster, Mr. Dempster, warning the boys that ghosts do not exist. A boy named Joseph Postlethwaite sits alone on a stool as punishment for claiming to see a ghost. Marian questions the boy who says he saw the ghost of Mrs. Fairlie by her grave stone. Marian leads Walter to the cemetery where Walter says he believes that the woman in white is Anne Catherick and that she wrote the letter to Laura. Marian returns to Limmeridge House while Walter examines the grave stone. It has been partially cleaned. Walter finds a cottage near the cemetery where he meets the wife of the sexton, or caretaker of the church. In this meeting Walter learns that the sexton has not recently cleaned the grave stone, so he suspects that Anne Catherick did. He returns to Limmeridge House with plans to hide by the grave stone to see if Anne Catherick returns to finish the cleaning. He works on his art when he notices Laura heading out for a walk with her pet Italian greyhound, Nina. Later, before sunset, he goes to the cemetery to spy on the grave stone.

***Short Analysis:***

The anonymous letter raises suspicion about the Baronet Glyde, but no proof. Collins creates foreboding and dread by hinting that something is not right about Glyde. Marian and Walter work together toward their mutual interest of keeping Laura to themselves. This is the beginning of their mutual quest to find something wrong with Sir Percival Glyde.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) and [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) cannot find anyone in the village who knows about the letter’s sender, and they end up at the school which Mrs. Fairlie established. Inside is a class full of boys. One is being punished and is forced to stand on a stool separate from the others. The schoolmaster berates the boy for claiming to believe in ghosts. He dismisses the other boys, except the boy on the stool, before he speaks to Walter and Marian.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Walter and Marian arrive at the end of the school day, just before the boys are sent home. The boy who stays behind to be punished is reprimanded for spreading stories about ghosts—both frightening the other children and going against the religious beliefs he would have been taught.

***Summary Part 2:***

The schoolmaster has not seen the old woman that [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) is looking for. On their way out, Marian stops to question the boy who is being punished for saying that he saw a ghost. The boy says that he saw the ghost night before, in the graveyard behind the school, and that the ghost was all in [white](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/symbols/white-clothes). Marian asks whose ghost it was, and the boy tells her that it was the ghost of Mrs. Fairlie. Marian is offended by this and thinks that there may be rumors or folk tales circulating about her mother, but the schoolmaster assures her that the boy only has this idea because he claims that he has seen the ghost standing over Mrs. Fairlie’s grave.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Ghosts often appear as white specters, but the white garments also link back to Anne Catherick’s determination to wear white clothes. Marian is insulted at first as she believes that the villagers have been gossiping about her dead mother. Marian feels that the people in Limmeridge owe her mother a great deal because she set up the school and that they should be grateful to her and respect her memory.

***Summary Part 3:***

As they leave, [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) asks [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) what he thinks about this. Walter wishes to see Mrs. Fairlie’s grave himself. Marian asks him what he suspects, and Walter replies that he believes the figure, dressed all in [white](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/symbols/white-clothes), was [Anne Catherick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/anne-catherick-the-woman). Marian tells Walter that she will show him to the grave and then return home because she is worried about [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie). She leads him to the entrance of the church yard and then leaves Walter by himself.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Walter has deduced from the boy’s description of the ghost, and from Anne’s connection to Mrs. Fairlie, that it is not a spirit that the boy has seen but Anne Catherick.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) looks around the grave for signs of interference but there are no footprints around it. However, he does notice that one side of the grave is dirty while the other looks as though it has been recently cleaned.

***Analysis part 4:***

Walter uses techniques of deduction (such as looking for footprints and examining the grave) which are frequently used by detectives in later crime novels, mysteries, and modern thrillers.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) leaves the church yard and, at the cottage next door, comes across an old woman hanging out washing. She tells him that she is married to the man who maintains the church yard but that he has been ill and unable to keep the graves clean. Hearing this and remembering the clean side of the grave, Walter decides to return at sunset and keep watch over the graveyard that night. He returns to his room to wait for dusk and, looking out from his sitting room window, sees [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) walking dejectedly through the grounds.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Walter deduces that, if the man who usually tends the graves is ill, then someone else must have cleaned Mrs. Fairlie’s grave. He decides to keep watch in the churchyard as he believes that this person also has a connection to Laura, the mystery of the woman in white, and the anonymous letter that Laura received. Walter can see that Laura is not at all happy or excited about her engagement.

***Summary Part 6:***

Just before nightfall, [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) returns to the church yard and finds a place to hide, just inside the entrance of the church, where he can safely observe Mrs. Fairlie’s grave without being seen.

***Analysis Part 6:***

By taking matters into his own hands and investigating the mystery himself, Walter sets out a blueprint for many famous fictional detectives, such as Sherlock Holmes, Sam Spade, and Hercule Poirot.