***Woman in White***

***Part 2***

***Section 4***

***Chapter 5***

### ***The Narrative of the Tombstone.***

***Summary:***

* Walter returns from South America in October 1850. He's a changed man, thanks to lots of epic adventures.
* He's still getting over Laura.
* Walter goes to visit his family and there learns the awful news of Laura's death.
* Walter is heartbroken and makes his way to Laura's grave to pay his last respects.
* Laura is buried next to her mother in Limmeridge.
* Suddenly two women approach.
* One is Marian.
* The other, to Walter's shock, is... Laura!
* Part 2 of the story ends here. Talk about a cliffhanger.

***Synopsis:***

The Narrative of Walter Hartright

Just as in Marian's dream, Walter escapes death three times on his journey back to England. He arrives in October at his mother's home a changed man. He learns of Laura's death and leaves to visit her grave. He mourns over her tombstone. Later, two veiled women approach. Marian Halcombe lifts her veil and cries out about her dream. The second woman comes to the grave and raises her veil to reveal Laura.

***Analysis (Ch1-5):***

By all legal documents, the dead woman buried at Limmeridge Church cemetery is that of Laura Fairlie. It is the body of Anne Catherick, and, thus, Laura faces the challenge of proving her identity to reclaim her name and her inheritance. People of good reputation, such as Jane Gould, Doctor Goodricke and all who attended the funeral agree that Laura is dead because they have all been tricked by Sir Percival and Count Fosco. Collins piles obstacle on obstacle against the sweet, passive young woman, as if all society worked against her. Collins ends the Second Epoch with death and the symbolic resurrection.

***Critical Study(Ch1-5):***

The narrative is resumed by [Hester Pinhorn](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#hester-pinhorn), a woman hired to work as a cook at the Count and Countess's London home. While employed there, she learns that the Countess's niece, Laura, will be coming to stay with them. Almost immediately after her arrival, Laura falls into a fit of convulsions, leading Hester to fetch a doctor. The doctor diagnoses a problem with Laura's heart, and expresses his doubts about whether she will live. Nonetheless, Laura seems much better the following day, but then takes a sudden turn for the worse and is declared dead by the doctor. He offers to register the death himself, since he is uncertain whether the Count will understand the logistics of how to do so. Eleanor handles the arrangements for Laura's funeral and burial with her mother in Cumberland. Corroborating documentation is provided by the doctor, and by [Jane Gould](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#jane-gould), who prepared the body for burial. Laura's death is recorded on her tombstone as having occurred on July 28, 1850.

The narrative is then picked up by Walter, who explains how he left Central America in the summer of 1850, and after escaping from a shipwreck arrived back in England in October. He immediately returns to London and goes to see his mother and sister, who break the news of Laura's death to him. Devastated, Walter decides to travel to Cumberland to visit her grave. While mourning there, he is surprised by two women. He recognizes the first as Marian but cannot identify the second until she lifts her veil and he realizes it is Laura herself. Walter's narrative then skips a week ahead, resuming with him living in a cheap rented house in London. Laura and Marian live on the floor below, having been passed off as his sisters. He documents what he was told by them of the intervening events.

Marian was told of Laura's departure by the housekeeper, and news of Laura's death followed a short time later. This upset Marian so much that it was weeks before she was able to travel. At that point, she and Mrs. Michelson went to London together and parted ways there. Marian went straight to the lawyer (finally named as Mr. Kyrle) to declare her suspicions about Laura's death at [Count Fosco](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#count-fosco)'s house. He started an investigation, finding the Count very helpful and cooperative. All the information seems validated by the doctor and servants, so the investigation is abandoned. Marian has by now returned to Limmeridge house, where she learns more details from [Frederick Fairlie](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#frederick-fairlie).

Count Fosco had stayed at Limmeridge House to arrange Laura's funeral and while there, had explained to Frederick that [Anne Catherick](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#anne-catherick) had been apprehended and returned to the asylum. She is now experiencing the delusion that her real identity is Lady Glyde, and Frederick is warned that if he is ever contacted by someone claiming to be Lady Glyde, he should ignore it. Meanwhile, Marian's investigations of Fosco and [Mrs. Rubelle](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#mrs-rubelle) have yielded nothing. All this time, Percival has been living in Paris, showing no interest in his wife's death. By October, Marian has decided to go to the asylum and visit Anne. She journeys to London, and by explaining her connection to the Glyde family is able to obtain permission to visit Anne. Marian talks with the owner of the asylum, who reveals that since Anne was returned to him in July by Count Fosco, she has seemed somehow different.

Marian is completely overwhelmed when, upon going with a nurse to see Anne, she immediately recognizes Laura. Thinking quickly, Marian promises to rescue her sister and bribes the nurse to have a private meeting with her the next day. Marian explains that Anne (Laura) has been wrongfully placed in the asylum and offers a large sum of money in exchange for helping her to escape. The nurse cooperates, and also agrees to say that she has heard Anne talking about returning to Hampshire, so that the pursuit will head in the wrong direction when her escape is discovered. Laura and Marian are able to leave immediately for Limmeridge House.

As they travel, Laura explains what happened after she left Blackwater Park. She arrived in London and was met by Fosco, who took her to an obscure house, reassuring her that Marian was there waiting for her. While Laura waited, two other men came in and introduced themselves as Fosco's friends. She seems to have been drugged, because her recollections after that are very fragmented. She believes she did in fact go to [Mrs. Vesey](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#mrs-vesey)'s and stayed there for the night, being attended by Mrs. Rubelle. The next day, she somehow left and the next thing she remembers is waking up at the asylum and being referred to as Anne Catherick. She remained there from July until Marian's arrival in October, and any of her claims of being Lady Glyde were dismissed as mad delusions.

When the two women return to Limmeridge House and Marian explains to Frederick what happened, he thinks she has been tricked by Anne. Even when Marian brings Laura into his presence, he claims not to know her. The servants are also unwilling to defend her identity. It is also dangerous for them to remain there, since the search for Anne will eventually extend to the neighborhood. They decide to flee back to the anonymity of London, and as they are passing by the grave yard, they happen to catch sight of Walter, and the three are reunited.

While the conclusion of Mrs. Michelson's narrative indicated that something bad had happened to Laura after she went to London, it is the series of short narratives from minor characters that fill in the rest. Given Laura's fragility and ill health at Blackwater Park, it seems plausible that she succumbed to illness very quickly after arriving at Count Fosco's home in London. The construction of this series of events relies on stories being corroborated by several individuals, including medical experts. The inclusion of the death certificate and of the engraving on the tombstone play with the theme of written documents corroborating truth, which has been present throughout the novel. These seem like official records that no one could ever question and which offer an incontestable narrative about Laura's fate.

Yet, in the novel's most dramatic moment, a grief-stricken Walter sees Laura appear at her own grave. This moment has been foreshadowed by both the initial appearance of the woman in white, and then Anne Catherick's appearance at the same graveyard, but is still incredibly shocking to a reader who has been convinced that Laura is dead. Like other moments in the novel, the power comes from the possibility that something supernatural might be taking place, followed by an explanation that, though rational, is actually even more shocking.

This section also marks a return to Walter as the narrator, who will remain the dominant voice for the rest of the novel. Even the explanation of the events that Marian and Laura experienced after Laura's supposed death, which took place while Walter was still absent, are mediated through his perspective. Readers hear his version of what Marian tells him of this time, not Marian's own version. Given the existing confusion, mistakes, and lack of clarity in the previous narratives, it seems more logical to have a single narrator recounting events, while also opening the door to potential bias and unreliability. Walter's return to narrative control also signals the reappearance of a heroic male figure who will take on the task of protecting Marian and Laura for the remainder of the story. Marian will assist him, but he will be the primary driver of strategies and plans. Ann Gaylin summarizes this perspective when she writes that, "Although Marian and Walter appear to contribute equally to solving the mystery, Walter ultimately controls what is told to whom" (Gaylin p. 129).

This structure and change of narration partially overshadows the power and impact of what Marian was actually able to achieve. Despite everything seeming clear-cut and straight forward, she refused to abandon her suspicions about the circumstances around Laura's death and tirelessly investigated until she uncovered the truth. Tellingly, when Marian realizes that Laura is in the asylum, she knows she cannot ask anyone for help. By this point, it is clear that virtually everyone else involved has proved either incompetent, untrustworthy, or both, and Marian will have to take action herself. Her one ally is a woman working at the asylum, meaning that while the detail can be lost since Walter is the one telling the story, Laura's actual rescue and salvation is accomplished entirely be female allies. This lack of support is driven home most cruelly when Laura and Marian seek out their uncle and he performs his most significant act of neglect and betrayal by claiming not to recognize Laura. The two women are now completely on their own, and thus Walter can step in as a new source of patriarchal protection.

***Critical Analysis(Ch1-5):***

This section of the story includes multiple brief narratives from minor characters. Each narrative either moves the story forward or provides a key bit of evidence regarding the actions of [Count Fosco](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Count_Fosco) and Sir Percival.

"The Narrative of Hester Pinhorn, Cook in the Service of Count Fosco," is recorded from her spoken testimony, as she is illiterate. She signs with her mark. Pinhorn has been hired to work for the Count and Countess. She and a housemaid are the only servants. Pinhorn describes the arrival at the Count's home of "Lady Glyde." Shortly afterward, the visitor has a seizure—with "her face ghastly white, and her hands fast clenched, and her head drawn down to one side." A local doctor, Mr. Goodricke, is called in, but "Lady Glyde" dies the following day. Plans are made for a funeral in Limmeridge, which Count Fosco attends; says Pinhorn, "He looked grand in his deep mourning, with his big solemn face, and his slow walk, and his broad hatband."

"The Narrative of the Doctor," written by Mr. Goodricke, affirms that a death certificate was signed for Lady Glyde, who died of an aneurism on *Thursday, July* *25,* 1850.

"The Narrative of Jane Gould" affirms that Gould, working for the undertaker, did "what was right and needful by the remains of a lady who had died at the house."

"The Narrative of the Tombstone" records an inscription that reads, in part, "Sacred to the Memory of Laura, Lady Glyde, wife of [Sir Percival Glyde](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Sir_Percival_Glyde), Bart., of Blackwater Park, Hampshire." The date of death is July 25, 1850.

"The Narrative of [Walter Hartright](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Walter_Hartright)" describes Hartright's return from Central America and some of his adventures there. While visiting his mother, he learns that Laura has died. He travels to Limmeridge to see her grave. In the cemetery he sees two veiled women. One raises her veil, and he realizes that it is Halcombe. When the second woman raises her veil, Hartright sees, "Laura, Lady Glyde ... standing by the inscription, and ... looking at me over the grave."

In this section, key events are recorded with their associated dates. While it seems, from the preceding chapters, that Fosco has lured Laura to his home, readers know that it is not Laura who died in his house. Thus it is clear that her death, burial, funeral, and tombstone were all false.

Readers are also introduced to another level of Victorian society. In Fosco's London home, several servants have been hired to do menial work. They have been asked to add to the narrative by attesting to specific events. The illiterate Hester Pinhorn, hired to do "plain cooking," tells her story at some length. She starts by declaring, "I know that it is a sin and wickedness to say the thing which is not," sounding very much like a child. Jane Gould, who prepares the corpse for the grave, simply states that she has done what is "necessary."

Both women attest to events in plain language, but neither is capable of thinking beyond what they witness or of questioning events. This is a typical portrayal of servants, who, at that time, were assumed to have little intellectual competence. In *The Woman in White*, [Collins](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/author/) is careful to portray only middle- and upper-class individuals as having the ability to think for themselves.

The dramatic graveside moment at which Laura is revealed to be alive is the height of gothic romance. It is also a classic cliffhanger that ends Epoch Two of the novel. The reader is left in painful suspense with many questions left to answer. If Laura is alive, who is in her grave? What happened between the time Laura left Blackwater and the moment when she appears to Hartright? What will happen next?

With the reappearance of Hartright, the story takes a new turn. It is clear that Halcombe has done as much as she can. It is now up to Hartright to help the women regain their lives and bring the villains to justice.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The narrative now continues through the testimony of [Walter Hartright](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright). Walter states that he has returned from his journey to America. Many of his companions died of tropical diseases or were killed by the Native tribes they encountered, and, on the way home, he was shipwrecked and almost drowned. He arrives home in London in October 1850 and goes immediately to visit his mother and sister in Hampstead. He can tell, as soon as he arrives at their house, that they have bad news and his mother implores him to be strong while she breaks it.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Walter’s account of his voyage corresponds with Marian’s prophetic dream in which she saw him escape disease, ambush, and, finally, shipwreck. His mother tells him of Laura’s death and has clearly been informed by Walter of his feelings for Laura.

***Summary part 2:***

Three days after learning of [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie)’s death, Walter travels to Limmeridge to visit her grave, as he hopes that this will bring him some comfort. He finds himself in the churchyard at Limmeridge, which holds so many memories of his time with Laura, and breaks down weeping, kneeling on her grave, as he tries to read the inscription on her tomb.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The inscription on the tomb, which includes Laura’s name and date of death, brings home the reality of her death to Walter. This suggests the importance of evidence or material records in determining truth.

***Summary part 3:***

As he kneels there, [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) hears footsteps approaching and looks up to see two women. He recognizes one as [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe)—although she looks ill and frightened—and the other has her face covered with a veil. Walter rises. The woman in the veil approaches him and Marian falls to her knees and cries, “My dream, my dream!” As the veiled woman reaches his side, Walter recognizes her eyes through the veil and her voice. She speaks the final, parting words that [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) said to him, and Walter knows, beyond a doubt, that Laura is not in the grave but standing directly before him.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Marian remembers her dream and realizes that it has come true when she sees Laura standing beside Walter at the graveside. Even though the evidence before him on the grave says that Laura is dead, Walter knows it is her because of the words she speaks and his own memory. This suggests that even when evidence seems concrete and to reflect truth, this may not necessarily be the case.