

VIRGINIA WOOLF MRS DALLOWAY

STAGE 5



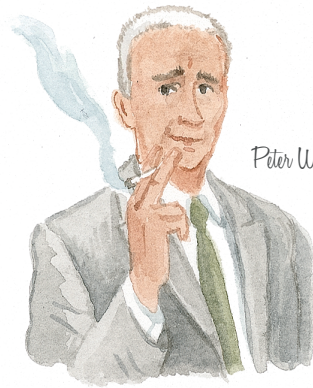
YOUNG ADULT  READERS

ELT
C1

MAIN CHARACTERS



*Clarissa
Dalloway*



Peter Walsh



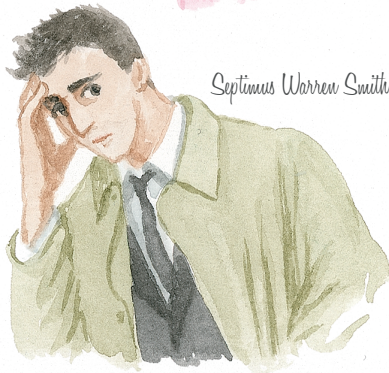
*Richard
Dalloway*



Sally Seton



*Lucrezia
Warren Smith*



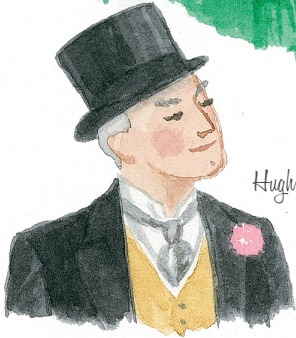
Septimus Warren Smith



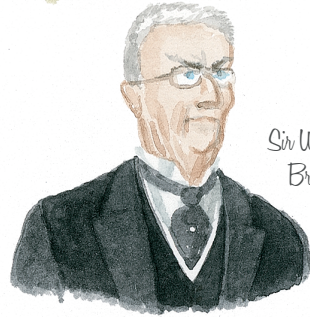
Elizabeth
Dalloway



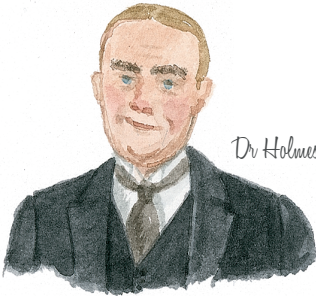
Miss Kilman



Hugh Whitbread



Sir William
Bradshaw



Dr Holmes



Lady Bradshaw



Aunt Helena

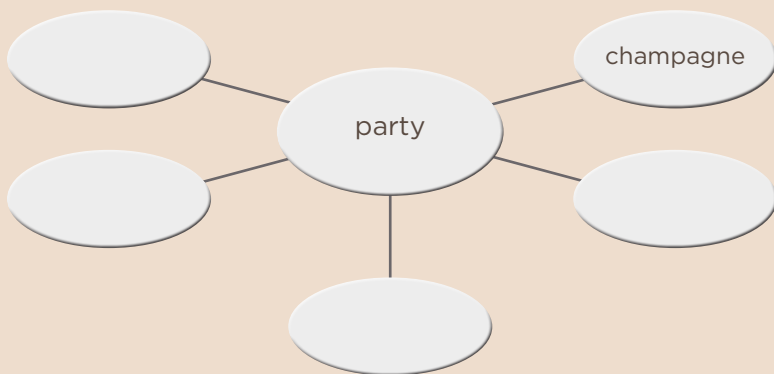


Ellie
Henderson

BEFORE YOU READ

Vocabulary

- 1** Read the blurb on the back of this book. *Mrs Dalloway* is about what happens to a small group of people on the day of a London party in the early 1920s. What words would you expect to find in the story? Use this word map to write down your ideas.



- 2** In Chapter One, we are introduced to the main character of this book, Clarissa Dalloway. Look at the front cover and make a list to describe her.

Mrs Dalloway seems:

Writing

- 3** This chapter is called *An Eventful Visit To The Florist's*. Can you imagine what happens when Clarissa goes out to buy flowers? Write your prediction here... and then read to find out what actually happened!

- 4** The story of *Mrs Dalloway* is set in London. Write a list of the streets and places you know of this city.

Reading Comprehension

- 5** At one point Clarissa says that she '*always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day*'. What do you think she means? Do you agree with her?

Speaking

- 6** Think about the title of this book. Why, for example, isn't it called *Mrs Dalloway's Party* or *An Important Occasion*? What does Virginia Woolf want to say with this title?

An Eventful Visit to the Florist's

▶ 2 Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

Lucy had enough work to do; Rumpelmayer's workmen were coming to take the doors off. And what a fresh morning it was, thought Clarissa Dalloway... just like being at the seaside.

On days like this at Bourton, as a girl of eighteen, she had burst open the French windows* and plunged* into the fresh, calm open air. Yet she also remembered standing at the open window, serious, thinking that something terrible was about to happen. She would stand and look at the flowers and the trees and the birds — until Peter Walsh said, perhaps at breakfast, 'Talking to the vegetables, were you?' Peter Walsh — he would be coming back from India soon; Clarissa remembered his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile and his grumpiness.*

Clarissa waited on the kerb* for a van to pass. Meanwhile, Scrope Purvis saw her and thought (as much as he knew his next-door neighbour in Westminster): a charming woman, full of energy, even though she is over fifty and has gone* very white since her illness.

Clarissa recalled that she had lived in Westminster for over twenty years now. As she crossed Victoria Street, Big Ben struck; first of all the musical warning, then the hour. Boom! She wondered why most people in this city loved life so much, amidst* the traffic; and this was

the French windows the pair of glass doors (to the garden)
plunged jumped
grumpiness bad temper

kerb edge of the pavement
has gone her hair has become
amidst surrounded by



AFTER-READING ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary

1a Look at these verbs from Chapter Nine. In the spaces, write the nouns formed from them.

- 1 enjoy _____
- 2 laugh _____
- 3 murmur _____
- 4 criticise _____
- 5 dislike _____
- 6 anticipate _____

1b Now do the same with these adjectives from the text. Write their nouns next to each one.

- 1 intimate _____
- 2 devoted _____
- 3 precise _____
- 4 charming _____

Reading Comprehension

2 Are these statements true (T) or false (F)?

- | | T | F |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Peter does not like the way Clarissa greets her guests. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Clarissa is surprised to see Sally at her party. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Nobody is interested in the Prime Minister. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Clarissa is crying because she doesn't want to look like her mother. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Old Aunt Helena has been invited to Clarissa's party. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Clarissa tells Peter and Sally that she will talk to them later. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 Peter opens and shuts his pocket-knife when he is bored. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 Seeing Clarissa makes Peter happy. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Grammar

3 Look at these examples from Chapter Nine and re-write them in indirect speech, using the verb in CAPITALS.

'How delightful to see you!' said Clarissa to everyone. TELL
Clarissa told everyone how delightful it was to see them.

1 'How awfully good of you to come!' she said. REMARK

2 'I can't believe it!' Clarissa cried. REPLY

3 'Richard so much enjoyed his lunch party,' she said. BE CONVINCED

4 'But I can't stay,' she said. DECIDE

5 'But where is Clarissa?' said Peter. WONDER

Vocabulary

4a Look at these words. The first adjective is from the chapter you have just read; the other three are possible synonyms. Circle the one word which is NOT a synonym.

- | | | | | |
|----------|----------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| 1 | <i>amusing</i> | entertaining | funny | annoying |
| 2 | insincere | critical | dishonest | artificial |
| 3 | delighted | thrilled | ecstatic | pleasing |
| 4 | distinguished | different | respected | notable |
| 5 | extraordinary | exceptional | supernatural | tremendous |
| 6 | delicious | lovely | delightful | delirious |

4b Now write down the odd word out, look it up in your dictionary or online and write an example sentence of your own.

Virginia Woolf

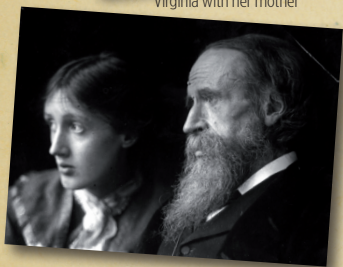
Life and Times



Virginia with her mother

A Stimulating Childhood

Virginia Woolf was born on 25 January, 1882 into an upper-middle-class literary family in Victorian London. The family lived near Hyde Park and had a busy social life involving artists, writers, politicians and aristocrats. Virginia was educated at home and she became an enthusiastic reader of her father's books. She soon decided that she wanted to be a writer.



Virginia with her father

Death and Its Effects

By the age of 24, Virginia had suffered four deaths in the family which were to have a significant effect on her health for the rest of her life. Her mother Julia died when Virginia was only 13 years old; two years later, her half-sister Stella Duckworth died suddenly. Virginia's father died in 1904 after a long illness and then two years later her brother Thoby died while travelling in Greece. Virginia was obsessed with the memory of her dead parents; she wrote a portrait of them in her 1927 novel *To The Lighthouse*. She suffered a mental breakdown after her mother died and again after her father's death, when she attempted to commit suicide for the first time.

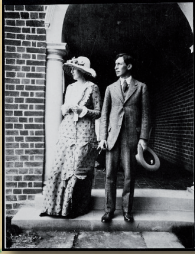


Virginia with her sister Vanessa Bell

Lively Evenings

In 1904, Virginia, her sister Vanessa and their two brothers moved to the west central area of London known as Bloomsbury. They and their brothers' Cambridge University friends formed The Bloomsbury Group, inviting artists

and students to get together at Virginia's house on Thursday evenings to discuss such topics as religion, sex and art. For Virginia, these weekly meetings made up for the undergraduate education which Victorian society had refused to give her.



Virginia with her husband
Leonard Woolf

Marriage and Publishing

In 1912 Virginia married one of her brother's university friends, Leonard Woolf, a civil servant. After their marriage, he became an independent intellectual and writer. In 1915, Virginia's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, was published and two years later, she and Leonard founded The Hogarth Press, which in time would become an important publisher of works by such authors as Katherine Mansfield, Sigmund Freud and T.S. Eliot.

A New Kind of Novel

After the First World War, Virginia looked for a written style which would reflect the chaos and insecurity of post-war England. When *Mrs Dalloway* was published in 1925, it presented readers with an experimental technique known as "stream of consciousness" — depicting a

world in which characters experience events and sensations, then change their minds or remember things differently; a world in which reality is different for each person... all within the everyday context of shopping, having lunch, going for a walk and preparing for a party.

Success, Illness... and The End

Although Virginia continued to struggle with mental illness, she had a busy social life, much like Clarissa Dalloway. Four more novels — *To The Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, *The Waves* and *The Years* — were published in her lifetime and one, *Between The Acts*, appeared posthumously. Soon after she had completed the manuscript of this last work, Virginia became too ill to work. On 28 March 1941, she went to the River Ouse near her Sussex country home and walked into the water, her pockets full of stones. Her body was found only three weeks later. "Dearest," she wrote in a note to Leonard, "I feel certain that I am going mad again ... And I shan't recover this time. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do."



The Style of *Mrs Dalloway*



What Happens?

Anyone who reads *Mrs Dalloway* might say that the story does not contain much excitement; only at the end of the novel does something dramatic happen to one of the characters. By the final pages, we have returned to the safe social context of Clarissa's high-society party. There is no traditional resolution to the questions raised by the people in this story — the focus simply returns to the central character of Clarissa, observed as the “perfect hostess”: “*For there she was.*” The main emphasis in *Mrs Dalloway* is on the thoughts of the characters rather than their actions.

Vanessa Bell self-portrait

Which Point of View?

In 1925, Virginia Woolf wrote in an essay: *“In the vast catastrophe of the European war, our emotions had to be broken up for us, and put at an angle from us.”* *Mrs Dalloway* presents what Woolf called “moments of being” — personal impressions of life which the characters experience at various moments of their day. Emotions change from happiness to fear, from nervousness to frustration, from anger to desperation. This technique is “stream of consciousness”: multiple points of view, the interior thoughts of major and minor characters, which often flow together. Clarissa Dalloway, for example, is seen through the eyes of several characters: her husband Richard Dalloway, her former lover Peter Walsh, her friend Sally Seton and her daughter’s history teacher Miss Kilman. There are even momentary impressions of her by less important characters. By the end of the book, we are left with a kaleidoscope of impressions of Clarissa.

Which Time?

A rich and varied element of *Mrs Dalloway* is how time is presented. All the characters are given a past, which comes from individual memories. Virginia Woolf talked in her diary in 1923 about how she constructed past lives for her characters: *“I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters. The idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight at the present moment.”* Often the past represents a crossroads where important decisions have been taken which influence lives — often resulting in the nostalgic view, “What if I had done it differently...?” Present time is shown subjectively through the characters’ “stream of consciousness” and objectively through the chimes of Big Ben, which serve as a dramatic reminder of reality for the characters.

Thinking and Talking

Virginia Woolf uses free indirect speech, which allows her either to express the interior monologue of the character or to represent closely what the person says and often to ridicule them. When Clarissa rests after visiting the florist’s, the reader “hears” her thoughts about her life and knows that these are only happening inside her head. When Rezia asks Dr Holmes for medical advice about Septimus’s condition, Woolf exposes the doctor’s superior tone when he says *“for did he not owe his own excellent health ... to the fact that he could switch off?”*; she is equally critical of Sir William Bradshaw’s behaviour towards Rezia: *“If Mrs Warren Smith was quite sure she had no more questions to ask — he never hurried his patients — they would return to her husband.”* The style of free indirect speech highlights the impressionistic universe of the book and its characters.