

Character profiles “Lady Windermere’s Fan”

Lord Windermere (major role)

Society regards him as the “ideal husband”. He would do almost anything to protect his beautiful young wife, Lady Windermere. He even lets Mrs Erlynne blackmail him in order to prevent his wife from getting to know the shocking truth about her mother. He is a typical gentleman and a man of principles.

Lord Darlington (major role)

A typical Wildean dandy character and Lady Windermere’s “fan” (in terms of admirer). He is a charming younger man with a high opinion of himself. Although he might come across as flirtatious and a bit smug he is truly in love with the happily married Lady Windermere who of course keeps rejecting him. He is one of the only characters to develop during the course of the play: From Act II on Lord Darlington becomes much more human and less self-centered as a man with a broken heart.

Lord Augustus Lorton (supporting role)

He is a lovable older gentleman terribly in love with Mrs Erlynne. As he is not very clever he appears to be completely beyond his depth when dealing with difficulties such as proposing to Mrs Erlynne. Unlike most of the other male characters he does not care for showing off or witty remarks (or maybe he is just not clever enough to come up with any of those himself?) and simply wants to spend the rest of his life in peace with a loving wife by his side.

Mr Dumby (supporting role)

He is a perfect specimen of the preferred sex of the privileged class in English society to which literature has accustomed us: a blasé, dispassionate and idle older man who will not trouble himself to get angry or excited or to show any emotions at all.

Mr Cecil Graham (supporting role)

One of the play’s most eccentric characters. He is the identified misfit - a contrary cynic. But although he appears so unlike the other male characters, he is part of society. He is an insecure and offensive young man masquerading as witty. His sense of humour is very sharp and biting.

Mr Hopper (minor role)

The young and handsome son of a successful Australian businessman. He is in love with Lady Agatha Carlisle. He often diverges from traditional male attire, possibly because he is a foreigner and as an outsider to London’s high society less bound by convention than all the other characters. His chief aim is to win Lady Agatha’s admiration. Speaks with an incomprehensible Australian accent.

Lady Windermere (major role)

The play’s protagonist. She is a very naive 21-year-old woman, married to the much older Lord Windermere and mother of a 6 months old boy. She is a puritan with very high principles and a strong dislike of egocentric and smug people. Her world view is strictly black and white - for her, people are either good or bad. But when the supposedly wicked Mrs Erlynne saves her from a terrible disgrace she learns that her opinions about the world and especially other people need some elasticity. She is one of the only characters to show a wide range of emotions throughout the play.

Duchess of Berwick (major role)

She is a seemingly polite - though acid-tongued - noble lady with a commanding manner and a very high opinion of herself. She is also a great scandalmonger, well-disguised under a layer of conventional politeness. When speaking she uses lots of circumlocutions. She is able to carry on entire conversations single-handedly.

Lady Agatha Carlisle (supporting role, but very few lines)

The Duchess of Berwick's daughter. She is a compliantly submissive adolescent in love with Mr Hopper. She is one of the play's funniest characters as she has one very memorable action: Her only line, which she keeps repeating in every single scene she is in, is "Yes, mamma." The perfect role for anyone not wanting to learn an awful lot of lines.

Lady Plymdale (supporting role)

A typical female representative of high society, she thinks highly of herself and is eager to make her mark. Most of the time she stands out in an atrocious, though thoroughly acceptable, manner.

Lady Stutfield - Lady Jedburgh - Mrs Cowper-Cowper (very small roles, about 2 lines each)

The three ladies are definitely some of the play's flattest characters. They are typical representatives of high society and as such do little else than to behave charmingly and say a few witty things now and then. They are absolutely interchangeable nonentities. They flit about the stage, talking non-stop like chattering birds.

Mrs Erlynne (major role)

A woman of about 40 who twenty years ago left her husband and her newborn daughter (Lady Windermere) for another lover and was in return left by him. She is now an outcast of society, struggling to make a living and find a way back into society. When she discovers that her daughter has married a rich man, she starts asking him for enormous sums of money. She is the suspicious wicked outsider of whom we hear much more than we actually witness. At the beginning of the play we get the impression of her as a thoroughly depraved and promiscuous woman, but later on we learn that there is more to her than just plain wickedness. She is in fact a lovely, bewitching and especially rather good woman. She is the living proof that even as an "older" woman one can have charm and beauty.

butler / maid

A typical loyal servant. Main duties: serving tea, announcing guests, delivering letters.