



ABOUT YOU

Answer the questions and compare your ideas.

- 1 Do you enjoy going for walks?
- 2 If so, do you prefer to go alone or with other people?
- 3 If not, what don't you like about going for walks?
- 4 What is the longest walk you have ever done (either for pleasure or to get somewhere you needed to be)?
- 5 Do you prefer to walk quickly or slowly?

Wilkie Collins was a Victorian writer who created a detective/ mystery style that is still very popular today. He was fascinated by the idea that however strange things seem, there is always a rational, scientific explanation behind them. In this extract a man has an unexpected meeting when taking a walk.

1 Read the text. As you read the text think about this question.

Who do you find more interesting – the man, or the woman? Why?

The Woman in White
Wilkie Collins



I had now arrived at that particular point of my walk where four roads met – including the road back to London. I had **mechanically** turned in this latter direction, and was walking along the lonely high-road when every drop of blood in

5 my body was brought to a stop by the touch of a hand laid lightly and suddenly on my shoulder from behind me.

I turned around instantly, with my fingers tightening round the handle of my walking stick.

10 There, in the middle of the broad bright highroad – there, as if it had that moment come of the earth or dropped from the sky – stood the figure of a woman, dressed from head to foot in white clothes, her hand pointing to the dark cloud over London, as I faced her.

15 I was far too surprised by the suddenness with which this extraordinary person stood before me, in the middle of the night and in that lonely place, to ask what she wanted. The strange woman spoke first.

“Is that the road to London?” she said.

20 I looked at her carefully, as she put that question to me. It was then nearly one o’clock. All I could see **distinctly** by the moonlight was a colourless, youthful face, **attentive**

eyes; light, pale, brownish-yellow coloured hair. There was nothing wild, nothing incorrect in her manner: it was quiet and calm, a little **melancholy** and a little suspicious.

25 “Did you hear me?” she said, still quietly and rapidly, and without the least **impatience**. “I asked if that was the way to London.”

30 “Yes,” I replied, “that is the way. You must excuse my not answering you before. I was rather surprised by your sudden appearance in the road; and I am, even now, quite unable to **account for** it.”

35 “You don’t **suspect** me of doing anything wrong, do you? I have done nothing wrong. I have met with an accident – I am very unfortunate in being here alone so late. Why do you suspect me of doing wrong?”

She spoke with unnecessary anxiety, and I did my best to **reassure** her.

40 “Please don’t suppose that I have any idea of suspecting you,” I said, “or any other wish than to be of assistance to you, if I can. I only wondered at your appearance in the road, because it seemed to me to be empty the instant before I saw you.”

GLOSSARY

mechanically	in a mechanical way, automatically
distinctly	in a way that is easy to see or remember
attentive	listening or watching carefully and showing that you are interested
melancholy	sad
impatience	impatient behaviour
account for	be the reason for something, or to explain the reason for something
suspect	not trust someone or something
reassure	say something to stop someone from worrying

2 Read the text again and answer the questions.

- 1 Imagine you had to create a picture for this extract. Describe what it would look like.
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- 2 Why do you think the man tightens his fingers around the walking stick?
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- 3 Why might it be significant that the extract happens at a 'crossroads'?
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- 4 What kind of 'accident' do you think the woman had?
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- 5 What do you think is going to happen next?
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VOCABULARY

3 Imagine someone interviewed the narrator about what happened when he met the woman in white. Complete the questions with the correct word from the box. One word is not used.

account for distinctly melancholy
reassure suspect

- 1 Can you remember the colour of this person's hair?
 - 2 Are you able to why this person was walking alone late at night?
 - 3 You said she seemed rather, can you tell us why?
 - 4 Did you there might be something she wasn't telling you?
- 4 Choose the correct word in italics to complete the text.
- 1 I was sure everything was fine and that's why I *suspected* / *reassured* her.
 - 2 Well, I *mechanically* / *distinctly* remember the colour of her hair – brownish-yellow.
 - 3 Of course, I was shocked – I reacted *distinctly* / *mechanically*, to defend myself.
 - 4 There was something very strange about her behaviour, that's why I *reassured* / *suspected* her.
 - 5 I think she wanted to get to London in a hurry and that explains her *melancholy* / *impatience*.

WRITING

5 Work in a small group. You are going to enter a competition to suggest the best walking tour of your town or city. Tours usually go through the most interesting parts of a town or city and, where possible, tell visitors about the history, traditions and buildings. A typical walk lasts between one and two hours. Your local council has announced a competition. Submit a plan of your tour, writing about 200 words.

We are inviting residents to suggest a walking tour of their town or neighbourhood. Describe the route and what visitors will learn about your community. You can also mention places to stop for something to eat and interesting shops to visit.

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SPEAKING

- 6 Work in groups. Look at the following situations in which people have a problem. Put the situations in order from 1 (most serious) to 4 (least serious), according to how big you think the problem is.
- A Kim has to send in answers for an important maths exam by 20.00. At 19.55 the internet connection stops working.
 - B Alex has missed the last bus home. A taxi is too expensive. Alex's parents go to bed very early.
 - C On Sunday morning Jan wakes up and suddenly remembers that it is her sister's birthday today and she forgot to get her a present. The shops are closed.
 - D Dani's two best friends (they don't know each other) have their birthdays on the same day. They have both organised a party and invited Dani.

Compare your ideas with your group. Try to reach an agreement on which is the most and least serious problem. Finally, suggest a solution for the most serious problem.