



The Woman in White (Penguin Classics)

Wilkie Collins

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Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, the first Victorian 'sensation novel' and one of the earliest mystery novels in English, weaves multiple narratives into a thrilling and suspenseful tale of mistaken identity and dark desires. This Penguin Classics edition is edited with notes and an introduction by Matthew Sweet. *The Woman in White* famously opens with Walter Hartright's eerie encounter on a moonlit London road. Engaged as a drawing master to the beautiful Laura Fairlie, Walter is drawn into the sinister intrigues of Sir Percival Glyde and his 'charming' friend Count Fosco, the 'Napoleon of crime', who has a taste for white mice, vanilla bonbons and poison. Pursuing questions of identity and insanity along the paths and corridors of English country houses and the madhouse, *The Woman in White* is the first and most influential of the Victorian genre that combined Gothic horror with psychological realism. Matthew Sweet's introduction explores the phenomenon of Victorian 'sensation' fiction, and discusses Wilkie Collins's biographical and societal influences. Included in this edition are appendices on theatrical adaptations of the novel and its serialisation history. Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) was born in London in 1824, the eldest son of the landscape painter William Collins. In 1846 he was entered to read for the bar at Lincoln's Inn, where he gained the knowledge that was to give him much of the material for his writing. From the early 1850s he was a friend of Charles Dickens, who produced and acted in two melodramas written by Collins, *The Lighthouse* and *The Frozen Deep*. Of his novels, Collins is best remembered for *The Woman in White* (1859), *No Name* (1862), *Armadale* (1866) and *The Moonstone* (1868). If you enjoyed *The Woman in White*, you might like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, also available in Penguin Classics.

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