

# III BA -ENGLISH

## V SEMESTER

### CONTENTES

- **UNIT- IV: DRAMA (Detailed study)**

**1.Arms and the Man--**George Bernard Shaw

2. Lady Windermere's fan-Oscar wilde

**Arms and the Man--**George Bernard Shaw

The play begins in the fall of 1885 during the Serbo-Bulgarian War. Raina, a Bulgarian woman from a wealthy family, learns from her mother, Catherine, that the Bulgarian cavalry have won a battle against the Serbs. Catherine adds that Sergius, Raina's fiancé, was at the head of the charge, and was as heroic in life as he appears in the picture Raina keeps in her bedroom. Louka, their servant, enters and warns Catherine and Raina that escaped Serbs fleeing the battlefield might be in the area, seeking refuge in the houses of Bulgarian families. Raina is not worried, and chooses to keep her window unlocked. In the night, a man enters the room through the unlocked window and says he will kill Raina if she makes a noise. The man is Swiss and an escaped soldier, fighting as a mercenary for the Serbians.

Raina is shocked to see that the man is tired and hungry, that he does not glorify battle, and that he is merely happy to have escaped the carnage alive. Raina helps him hide behind a curtain just as Catherine, Louka, and a Bulgarian officer enter to search the room for any Serbs who might be hiding in the area. Raina convinces them that no one is in her room, and they leave. Raina gives the man chocolate creams, which she keeps in a box in her room, and is shocked to hear that the man has no ammunition for his pistol, as he normally only keeps candies in his pockets. The man argues that Sergius's cavalry charge against the Serbs was foolish, and succeeded only by sheer luck. The Serbs had machine guns but were given the wrong ammunition by accident, and therefore could not mow down Sergius and his men. Raina agrees

to help the man escape later that night, though she rebukes him for making fun of her fiancé Sergius. The man sleeps as Raina enlists Catherine's help, and when Raina and Catherine return, they allow the man to rest since he has not slept for days.

The second act begins in the garden of the same house, though it is now spring of 1886. Louka is engaged to the house's head male servant, Nicola. Louka tells Nicola that he will never be more than a servant, and that she has higher aspirations. Louka tells him she knows many secrets about the Petkoff family, and Nicola says that he does, too, but would never blackmail his masters. Major Petkoff, the head of the family, returns from the war. He reports to Catherine that Sergius will never receive the military promotion Sergius craves, because Sergius has no command of military strategy. Sergius enters and is greeted warmly by the family, and especially by Raina, who still considers him a hero. Sergius says he has abandoned his commission in the army out of anger that he will never move up in the ranks. Sergius and Petkoff tell a story they heard about this Swiss soldier being hidden by two Bulgarian women during the soldier's retreat. Catherine and Raina realize the story is about them, but do not say anything.

Sergius speaks with Louka in private, and begins flirting with her. Louka reveals to Sergius that Raina might not remain faithful to Sergius, and Sergius is taken aback. They exit. A man named Bluntschli enters the family garden and Louka brings him to Catherine. Catherine realizes that he is the man that hid in Raina's room, the same man that she and Raina helped escape. Catherine worries that Sergius and Petkoff, who are conferring over military plans in the library, might encounter the soldier. Sergius and Petkoff have no idea that the story they heard about a soldier being helped by two Bulgarian women involves the Petkoffs. Bluntschli has come to return Major Petkoff's coat that Catherine and Raina lent him to escape. Raina is so happy to see him that she blurts out, "the chocolate cream soldier!" when she walks in the room, only to recover herself and blame her outburst, implausibly, on Nicola. Petkoff and Sergius, who have in fact already met Bluntschli during the war, ask Bluntschli to stay and pass the time.

In the final act, the various tensions of the play thus far are exposed. Louka tells Sergius that the man with whom Raina is in love is Bluntschli. Sergius

challenges Bluntschli to a duel because of this, but Bluntschli explains his way out of it. A picture of herself that Raina placed in her father's cloak for Bluntschli to find is exposed, proving that Raina has not been entirely truthful to Sergius. Raina admits that she has had feelings for Bluntschli since they first met. Major Petkoff is aghast. When Bluntschli acknowledges that he has loved Raina, Sergius and Louka reveal that they have been having a secret affair at Sergius' instigation, and Nicola releases Louka from their engagement. Bluntschli, whose father has just died, has come into a great deal of money, so Raina's parents are glad to marry her off to him and his handsome fortune. Raina is revealed to be twenty-three rather than seventeen, enabling Bluntschli in good conscience to ask for her hand in marriage. Bluntschli promises to hire Nicola, whom he admires, to run the hotels he has just received as part of his inheritance. Sergius accepts Louka as his lover in public, thus satisfying Louka's desire to move up in the social ranks. The play ends with Sergius exclaiming, of Bluntschli, "What a man!"

## Arms and the Man Themes

*Arms and the Man* is concerned foremost with the clash between knowledge and ignorance, or, otherwise stated, between realism and romanticism. [Raina](#) and her fiancé [Sergius](#) are steeped in the romanticism of operettas and paperback novels. [Bluntschli](#) uses his superior knowledge to disabuse Raina of her military delusions, while the experience of war itself strips Sergius of the grand ideals he held. The couple's idealized vision of warfare deflates in the face of additional information. In the realm of love, the couple's pretensions are defeated by the thoroughgoing pragmatism of their respective new matches: Bluntschli and [Louka](#). Both the Swiss Captain and Bulgarian maid confront their lovers about the gap between their words and their true selves, exposing their hypocrisy. When faced with reality, both Raina and Sergius are able to abandon their romantic delusions and embrace their honest desires.

## The Realities of War

When [Catherine](#) and Raina imagine war they picture brave and dashing officers fighting honorable battles. The reality of war falls far from this romanticized vision. In the play's opening scene Bulgarian soldiers hunt and kill fleeing Serbians in the streets of a quiet mountain town. Once Captain Bluntschli, a career soldier, appears, he becomes an eloquent messenger for the horrors of war. He describes conditions of starvation and exhaustion at the front lines. Moreover, having been under fire for three days, he seems to be suffering from some form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, jumping nervously when Raina squeals. What first appears to be the most glorious moment in the war, Sergius' cavalry charge, is revealed to be an absurd case of dumb luck. Later in the play Captain Bluntschli helps [Major Petkoff](#) and Sergius coordinate the return routes of surviving troops so as to prevent starvation. Since the play begins in the aftermath of the Serbo-Bulgarian War, the reader doesn't experience any titillating battles, only a grinding post-war reality where hunger and death loom in the background. This picture successfully deflates any romantic notions the characters or audience may hold.

## The Realities of Love

Raina and Sergius are as delusional about love as they are about war, seeming to have derived their understanding of romance primarily from Byronic poetry. They celebrate each other with formal and pretentious declarations of "higher love", yet clearly feel uncomfortable in one another's presence (25). The couple, with their good looks, noble blood and idealistic outlook, seem to be a perfect match, but in [George Bernard Shaw](#)'s world love does not function as it does in fairy tales. Instead Raina falls for the practical and competent Swiss mercenary that crawls through her bedroom window and Sergius for the pragmatic and clever household maid. Love does not adhere to conventions regarding class or nationality. Moreover, love is not some abstract expression of poetic purity. Love in *Arms and the Man* is ultimately directed at those who understand the characters best and who ground them in reality.

## Incompetent Authority

Throughout the play competence and power do not align with established authority. Louka, the insolent but charming maid, repeatedly flouts social rules. By violating traditional ideas of authority and power, she is able to win marriage to a handsome and wealthy war hero. Her manipulation of Sergius, who is privileged both in terms of wealth and gender, demonstrates that control does not necessarily derive from social authority. Likewise, Catherine manipulates her husband Major Petkoff, withholding information and shepherding him about. Major Petkoff, as the oldest wealthy male, should be the most powerful character according to contemporary social hierarchy. Yet Petkoff proves to be a buffoon; he is, in fact, the character least able to control outcomes, as he rarely understands what is unfolding before him.

## Class

Class has a large and continuous presence in *Arms and the Man*. The Petkoffs' upper-class pretensions are portrayed as ridiculous and consistently played for laughs. The family's pride in their so-called library (a sitting room with a single bookshelf) becomes a running joke throughout the play. Shaw praises the family's more local and humble roots: admiring the oriental decorations in Raina's bedroom and describing Catherine's earthy local beauty. In contrast he condemns and mocks their attempts to conform to romantic notions of what nobility means. Raina's outdated Viennese fashions and Catherine's tea gowns are treated as ridiculous. Louka's struggle demonstrates many of the effects of class in Bulgarian society. She feels restricted by her station, which condemns her to a life where reading books is considered presumptuous. Using her wit, Louka manages to escape these boundaries, achieving equality with the wealthy Sergius.

## Bravery

At the beginning of the play Sergius, like both Catherine and Raina, imagines bravery as the will to undertake glorious and theatrical actions. This belief leads the young Bulgarian Major to lead a regiment of cavalry against a line of machine guns. Despite his dumb luck, the action identifies him as an incompetent and somewhat ludicrous figure, halting his advancement in the ranks. When he returns at the end of the war Louka challenges his romantic

notions of bravery. Sergius admits that “carnage is cheap”: anyone can have the will to inflict violence (45). Louka submits that the subtle bravery required to live outside social rules and constraints is more worthy of praise. At the play’s end Sergius demonstrates this particular kind of bravery when he embraces Louka in front of the others and agrees to marry her.

Like Sergius, Captain Bluntschli also undermines traditional understandings of bravery. He tells Raina that there are two types of soldiers - young and old - not brave and cowardly. The young are too inexperienced to know true fear, and the old have reached their age by championing survivalism over heroics. The Swiss mercenary is willing to face danger when necessary but he does not act in ways that court death and is always relieved to avoid combat.

## **Personal Honesty**

It is through personal honesty that all the play’s major conflicts are resolved. Raina abandons her indignant posturing and admits that Sergius exasperates her, allowing her to pair up with Bluntschli. Likewise, Sergius overcomes his overly romantic understanding of the meaning of love and bravery, opening himself to an engagement with Louka. It is only when the couple confronts and accepts their true desires and feelings that they find happiness with their ideal partners. Pretending to share noble love makes both Raina and Sergius miserable; Raina fantasizes about shocking her fiancé’s propriety and Sergius cannot wait for Raina’s departure so he can complain about their tiring relationship to a pretty young maid. In the end, even Bluntschli embraces his inner romantic self, asking for the hand of the girl he is smitten with. Each character gives in to his honest desires and is rewarded with an optimal outcome.

## **CHARACTER SKETCHES**

- **Raina**

The play’s protagonist and heroine. Raina is a young woman living in the provinces in Bulgaria, and born into the wealthy Petkoff family. She pines for her fiancé Sergius, who has just led a successful, if ill-planned, cavalry charge against the Serbs. Raina meets and falls in love with Bluntschli, the Swiss “chocolate cream soldier” fighting for the Serbs.

- **Bluntschli**

Swiss mercenary fighting for the Serbs, and Raina's love interest, who she calls "the chocolate cream soldier." He is skilled in warfare and emotionally sophisticated, but has a weakness for sweets. Bluntschli hides in Raina's room with her help. When he returns in the spring to return Major Petkoff's cloak, events are set into motion that bring out Catherine and Raina's conspiracy to help him, and that lead to his engagement to Raina and an ultimately happy ending.

- **Sergius**

Raina's fiancé, and the hero of the Battle of Slivnitsa. Sergius, by his own and many others' admission, has no military skill. He led the charge out of a mixture of foolhardiness and desire for self-aggrandizement. Sergius flirts with the Petkoffs' servant Louka, and the play ends in their engagement.

- **Catherine**

Raina's mother, and matriarch of the Petkoff household. Catherine wants to marry off her daughter to as wealthy and prominent a man as possible. When Sergius appears to be this man, Catherine approves of the union. As it becomes clear that Sergius is not the man he presented himself to be, Catherine is willing to switch her allegiances to Bluntschli. Catherine is focused on making sure the Petkoffs' are up-to-date in their home furnishings and technology.

- **Louka**

The Petkoffs' female servant. Louka is engaged to Nicola, the head male servant. She has a vexed if flirtatious relationship with Sergius, who engaged to Raina. Louka wants to better her social station by marrying a noble, and criticizes Nicola for having no aspirations over those of a common servant.

- **Major Petkoff**

Head of the Petkoff family, and Raina's father. The Major is a decent if unambitious soldier, and he seems concerned mostly with maintaining his family's social position in the rural parts of Bulgaria. He and Catherine are willing to accept Bluntschli as Raina's suitor by the play's end only after he demonstrates just how wealthy he is.

- **Nicola**

Head male servant of the Petkoff estate. Nicola initially reprimands Louka for her willingness to leverage information she's heard as gossip against the Petkoffs. Louka feels that Nicola is not ambitious enough because he is content to be a servant for the rest of his life. Nicola ends the play by breaking his engagement amicably with Louka, allowing her to be engaged to Sergius.

- **Bluntschli's friend**

A soldier for the Serbian side, who knows Bluntschli. This unnamed friend meets Petkoff and Sergius during an exchange of goods. He tells them a story about his friend who hid in a Bulgarian home and escaped with the help of two Bulgarian women. Petkoff and Sergius have no idea this soldier's story is about Bluntschli, Raina, and Catherine.



## Objective Type-Questions

### 1. Near what is the Petkoffs' house situated?

- Moscow
- The Dragoman Pass
- Petersburg
- North Bulgaria

### 2. Raina's father holds what rank in the Bulgarian army?

- Major
- Corporal
- General
- Lieutenant

### 3. What does Louka tell Raina in the opening scene of the play?

- How to find a trapdoor in her room
- How to unbuckle her shoes with the light off
- How to close the window without locking it entirely shut
- How to find the chocolate creams

### 4. To whom is Louka engaged?

- Nikolai
- Nicola
- Ricola
- Roku

### 5. From where does Bluntschli hail?

- Lichtenstein
- Serbia
- France
- Switzerland

**6. Whose picture does Raina keep in her room at the start of the play?**

- Sergius's
- Petkoff's
- Bluntschli's
- Catherine's

**7. Catherine has what installed in the Petkoff house?**

- A dumbwaiter
- A garage for horses
- An electric bell for the servants
- An electric bell for the dogs

**8. The Serbs are allied with members of which empire?**

- The Russian
- The Batavian
- The Austrian
- The Transpalpatinian

**9. Bluntschli asks Raina to let him do what, when he is in her room?**

- Sleep
- Eat dinner in the kitchen
- Look for ammunition
- Look for rope

**10. The play might *not* be described as of which subgenre?**

- Marriage comedy
- Social satire
- Melodrama
- Comedy of manners

**11. Why has Sergius resigned his army commission?**

- He's angry he'll never be promoted
- He's had an affair

- He got too many men killed in the war
- He was too good a soldier

**12. What does Petkoff do instead of using the electric bell to call the servants?**

- Whisper
- Write notes
- Ride out on horseback to find the servants
- Yell

**13. What do Raina and Catherine lend Bluntschli?**

- A coat
- A stick
- A bandana
- A pistol

**14. What is the physical evidence that Raina has feelings for Bluntschli?**

- A necklace
- A golden chocolate
- A picture of herself on which Raina has written a note
- A bottle of wine

**15. The play is written in which form?**

- Metrical verse; pentameter
- Metrical verse; hexameter
- Prose
- None

**16. What does Bluntschli help Sergius and Petkoff with?**

- Movement of regiments
- Wallpapering the library
- Learning the rules of a duel
- Making a chocolate cream dessert

**17. What makes Sergius's charge successful?**

- Lack of Serbian ammunition
- Sergius's skill
- Russia's lack of counter-charge
- Petkoff's plan

**18. To whom does Louka get engaged?**

- Nicola
- Nikolai
- Sergius
- Bluntschli

**19. What job does Nicola earn at the end of the play?**

- Manager of a store
- Manager of a hotel
- Manager of a restaurant
- Knight

**20. What is revealed about Bluntschli in Act Three?**

- He's not a real soldier
- His father was poor
- His father was enormously wealthy
- He is not Swiss

**21. What does the Petkoff family brag about?**

- Their crest
- Their basement
- Their goats
- Their library

**22. What is Louka willing to do to the Petkoffs, to advance her own social status?**

- Steal from them
- Leave them
- Use their secrets against them after spying on them

- Physically harm them

**23. What does Sergius do to Louka when they speak privately?**

- Gives her money
- Hurts her wrist
- Tells her about his family
- Asks her to clean his room

**24. What does the play end in a flurry of?**

- Gunfire
- Engagements
- Divorces
- Thefts

**25. Which of the following is not a symbol in the play?**

- Chocolate creams
- The library
- The cloak
- The Dragoman Pass

## **Lady Windermere's Fan Character List**

### **Lord Windermere**

Lord Windermere plays a major role in the play. Society sees him as the perfect man and great husband. He is the center of the conflict because there are rumors being spread about him. The rumors are he is sleeping with Mrs. Erlynne. The whole play the reader is left wondering if they are true or not.

### **Lady Windermere**

She is the wife of Lord Windermere and the mother of his child. She tends to forget her duties as a mother and starts to think of leaving her husband because of the rumors going around the town. She is the daughter of Mrs. Erlynne but never actually finds out about that herself. The play takes place during her twenty-first birthday party.

### **Lord Darlington**

He is good friends with Lord and Lady Windermere. He is a charming bachelor in society. He has feelings for Lady Windermere. He goes along with the rumors to try to get Lady Windermere to leave with him.

### **Lord Augustus Lorton**

He is a sweet, older man. He is in love with Mrs. Erlynne. He allows her to tell him what to do and he doesn't mind it one bit. He just wants to have a woman by his side and spend the rest of his life with someone.

### **Mr. Dumby**

He is a minor character. He is the typical Englishman of high society.

### **Mr. Cecil Graham**

He is a supporting character. He is very eccentric. He is part of high society but he is not like the other men. He has a witty sense of humor.

### **Mr. Hopper Parker**

He is an Australian businessman in high society. He is in love with the Duchess of Berwick's daughter Lady Agatha. He is an outsider in the London high society because he is Australian.

### **Duchess of Berwick**

She is considered a noblewoman by high society. She is a talkative person and highly interested in scandal and drama.

### **Lady Agatha Carlisle**

The Duchess of Berwick's daughter, who throughout the whole play only says two words: "Yes Mamma." She is in love with Mr. Hopper.

### **Lady Plymdale**

She is the typical London woman of high society. She thinks highly of herself and behaves in an acceptable manner.

### **Lady Stutfield**

A minor character who says a few lines. She is a typical representation of a woman of high society.

### **Lady Jedburgh**

A minor character in high society who says a few witty lines. She is always in the background of scenes during the party talking incessantly.

### **Mrs. Cowper-Cowper**

She flutters around during the play. She doesn't say much as a very minor character. She does what she needs to do to stay a part of high society.

### **Mrs. Erlynne Rosalie**

A woman in her forties who left her husband years ago. The town knows her as a loose woman. They all judge her and have labeled her as a woman who sleeps with married men. The conflict in the movie is Lord Windermere is paying her off but for what purpose? The reader doesn't find out until the very end that she is the mother of Lady Windermere. Lord Windermere pays her off so she doesn't come out and ruin Lady Windermere's reputation. She starts out the play as a conniving woman but towards the end redeems herself and helps out her daughter.

## **MORALITY AND AMBIGUITY**

At the start of Oscar Wilde's play *Lady Windermere's Fan*, which largely centers around a stuffy, upper-class party, **Lady Windermere** herself and several of the other characters have very clear-cut notions of what makes people good or bad. Lady Windermere, a young wife and well-respected member of London society, is universally seen as good and



moral, and she believes that she should only associate with other moral people. Morality and immorality seem to be diametrically opposed, with no possibility of middle ground. However, the boundaries between moral and immoral become muddled as the play goes on, eventually becoming so blurred that it is impossible to separate the two. Good people can easily be mistaken for bad ones and vice versa, but Wilde seems to make an even further-reaching claim: when it comes to human beings and the complicated world in which they live, rigid concepts of good and evil are essentially meaningless.

In Act I, most of the characters seem to be confident in their understanding of what makes a person moral or immoral, but this distinction quickly begins to get confused. Discussing which guests she accepts in her home, Lady Windermere tells her friend **Lord Darlington** that, as far as she's concerned, a man or woman who behaves badly is an irredeemably bad person. Though Lord Darlington accuses her of being a Puritan, she insists of such people: "I think they should never be forgiven." Lord Darlington believes that thinking about good and evil should be a bit more flexible, but his own philosophy is essentially just an inversion of Lady Windermere's. Lady Windermere and the other ladies call him "bad," but he contends that seeming bad is actually an indication of underlying goodness: "Oh, nowadays so many conceited people go about Society pretending to be good, that I think it shows a rather sweet and modest disposition to pretend to be bad." Still, Lord Darlington's ideas and behavior suggest early on that it's much harder than Lady Windermere thinks to figure out who's good or not. The conflict at the end of this act results directly from Lady Windermere's devotion to her ideals of goodness: "How hard good women are!" exclaims her husband, **Lord Windermere**, when she refuses to consider inviting the disreputable **Mrs. Erlynne** to her birthday party. "How weak bad men are!" Lady Windermere counters, setting up a strict dichotomy that will turn out to have disastrous results in the coming scenes.

During and after the party that Lady Windermere throws, the distinctions between "good people" and "bad people" become even less clear. The various comments that guests make throughout the party contribute to the sense that morality and immorality may be almost interchangeable at times. For example, **Lady Plymdale** tells Lord Windermere not to be seen paying attention to his wife, since public kindness will only make the guests think that he beats her in private: "The world has grown so suspicious of anything that looks like a happy married life." The speed with

which nearly everyone at the party changes their opinions of Mrs. Erlynne also shows how flimsy conventional notions of good and evil can be. Despite being convinced only hours earlier that Mrs. Erlynne was as scandalous as can be, the Duchess of Berwick for one is immediately convinced of her goodness simply because Lady Windermere—an ostensibly good person—invited her to the party. The conversation between the men in Lord Darlington’s apartment after the party also underscores how meaningless they find clear-cut ideas of good and bad, echoing the play’s overarching message. They know that women consider all men to be bad (as the Duchess of Berwick confirmed in the first act), but the men find this label unimportant.

As the play nears its conclusion, Mrs. Erlynne—whose reputation has shifted dramatically throughout the play—emerges as the clearest example of how morality and immorality can never be completely separate when it comes to human beings. On the one hand, Mrs. Erlynne seems to demonstrate her goodness when she sacrifices her reputation in order to prevent Lady Windermere from making the mistake of leaving her husband. Lady Windermere interprets this action as selfless and takes it as evidence that even people who behaved badly in the past can be worthy of forgiveness after all. However, the reader knows what Lady Windermere doesn’t: Mrs. Erlynne is actually Lady Windermere’s mother, and her motivations throughout have been essentially self-serving, as she has been trying to shed her scandalous reputation and hoist herself back into high society. When Lord Windermere accuses Mrs. Erlynne of blackmailing him in order to regain acceptance in society, she doesn’t deny it. The reader has no choice but to accept conflicting truths about Mrs. Erlynne: she loves her daughter, Lady Windermere, and takes action to protect her, but she still behaves unethically and refuses to repent. Mrs. Erlynne is unabashed about both her morality and her immorality, demonstrating that people dealing with the world’s complicated realities can never fall cleanly into one category or another.

Even though Lady Windermere doesn’t have all the facts about Mrs. Erlynne (by the end of the play, she still doesn’t know that the woman is actually her mother), she nonetheless explains to Lord Windermere in Act IV that her previous definitions of good and bad people were faulty, saying, “There is the same world for all of us, and good and evil, sin and innocence, go through it hand it hand.” Though Lord Windermere doesn’t know it, this line is also an admission of Lady Windermere’s own guilt; the events of the play have forced her to do things that she thinks are immoral, like contemplate leaving her husband, even though she used to believe that she

never would do such things. By the time that Lady Windermere calls Mrs. Erlynne a “good woman” at the end of the play, it’s clear that that term—which also shows up in the play’s subtitle—means much more than it might initially seem to. As Lord Darlington hinted in the first act, goodness among humans can also be shorthand for evil, and Mrs. Erlynne and Lady Windermere both demonstrate that when people are faced with real-world challenges, neither quality can exist without the other.

## **Lady Windermere’s Fan Symbol Analysis**

The play’s most prominent symbol, **Lady Windermere’s** fan represents the performative nature of femininity. Traditionally, respectable young women like Lady Windermere would have used beautiful fans like this one both as fashionable accessories and as ways to hide their faces in social situations, thus appearing more ladylike. At the start of the play, Lady Windermere uses her fan in this conventional way; it’s simply an appealing gift from her husband, **Lord Windermere**. However, the fan’s meaning changes when Lady Windermere threatens to hit **Mrs. Erlynne** with it; at this moment, Lady Windermere shows that performances of femininity can actually be violent and dangerous. The fan continues to highlight both the pitfalls and the benefits associated with attempting to be a respectable woman. On the one hand, the fan is nearly Lady Windermere’s downfall in **Lord Darlington’s** apartment, but on the other hand, both she and Mrs. Erlynne go on to use it as a tool to manipulate men for their own gain. For example, Mrs. Erlynne wins **Augustus’s** affection back in part by asking him to carry the fan. At the end of the play, Lady Windermere gives the fan to Mrs. Erlynne, and the gift acts as a symbol of their ongoing bond, suggesting that dealing together with the strictures of society is one way in which women learn to gain strength from each other. It’s also significant that the fan bears their shared name, Margaret; this fact underscores how their identities are both tied to their performances of womanhood.

