

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

Character Profiles

THE OLD GENTLEMAN

A man of the upper class who reminisces about his youth in **1870's New York City**. He acts as narrator of his memories, and provides both social context and emotional insight into his actions and those of others.

THE OLD GENTLEMAN

*I have lived in New York all my life and I would like to tell you a story about that city-- not this mad thing we have now, with paved streets, and telephones inside **people's** homes, and barely a garden left below 42nd Street...**No**, I want to take you back to the New York of my youth where on a January evening in the early **1870's**, all of society gathered at the old Academy of Music - **that's** where we went in those days before they built the Metropolitan Opera House on 39th Street. You heard me say "**all of society**." That will tell you how long ago it was, for in those days, all of society could fit in that one building, distributed among its 18 boxes.*

(Scene 1)

NEWLAND ARCHER

An eligible bachelor and young lawyer from a well-connected family in good standing with New York society. Though Newland is an adventurous, passionate, and inquisitive golden boy, he has been educated to value and follow high society's codes of conduct and status quo-in the realms of love and social interaction. Secretly however, Newland yearns to experience a world beyond the insular social rules he has always known.

NEWLAND ARCHER

*We must consider who else will be affected by our decisions. And if we see that others may be hurt by what we wish to do, and we decide not to act, there is a comfort in knowing that whatever the personal loss, kindness has been preserved, which is a way of upholding **one's** honor— surely those are worthy goals. Indeed they are the basic tenets of society.*

(Scene 9)

MAY WELLAND

Preferring birdsong to Mozart, May is also particular, poised, and rather conventional and unadventurous in her interests and tastes. She is also affianced to Newland. Family, tradition, and social standing are very important to May; she seeks to hold tight to these things as she embarks on establishing her future as a woman of society.

MAY WELLAND

I was worried that the food would not be pleasant but mercifully the English got [to Florida] years ago and have made everything as we know it. I never like to be surprised by something I'm expected to eat.

(Scene 13)

ELLEN

The Countess Olenska. She is cousin to May Welland and newly returned stateside. Ellen wishes to reestablish herself in the good graces of New York society despite the scandal of having left her husband, the Count Olenski from Poland, behind in Europe. Authentic, daring, and intellectual, the bewitchingly different, Ellen cares deeply about the happiness of the family she is returning to and also her own independence.

NEWLAND

You've been away from us for a long time.

ELLEN

*So long that I **must've** died and gone to heaven. Certainly, compared to where I've been, New York is heaven. Heaven on earth!*

(Scene 1)

MRS. MANSON MINGOTT

May Welland's grandmother, true matriarch of the Mingott/Welland clan, and pillar of New York society. Known for her wealth, but also for occasionally penny pinching when it comes to luxuries. She is even-handed, though possesses the capacity for biting critique in the maintenance of her **family's** reputation.

MRS. MANSON MINGOTT

*Honor is honor— and **there's** no amount of icing **that's** going to make that mudpie into a cake!*

(Scene 27)

MRS. WELLAND

May Welland's mother, married to Mr. Welland and dutiful member of the Mingott/Welland clan. She is part of the **support system** of May's immediate family, and concerned with social norms, expectations, and scrutiny.

MRS. MANSON MINGOTT

*Don't get me started on it, I've told her she can stay here forever, but **she's** out looking for her own house.*

MRS. WELLAND

At the shopping hour, with the streets so crowded and the sun so bright?

THE OLD GENTLEMAN

Which was code, understood by all in our hieroglyphic world, to mean that Ellen should not be so conspicuous.

(Scene 3)

LARRY LEFFERTS

Socialite acquaintance of Newland and fellow frequenter of the opera. Larry, an accomplished gossip, masks flaws in his own character by deflecting attention onto others.

LARRY LEFFERTS

She ran off with her husband's secretary, a man closer to her age than the Count's. Didn't last. A few months later, she was living alone in Venice. Lovell Mingott went to see her and found her desperately shaken. He brought her back here which is to be expected—she's family, they should coddle her—but at home. To parade her around in public like this—

(Scene 1)

JULIUS BEAUFORT

A nouveau riche banker—one of the wealthiest men in town—who has married into the Mingott family. He is known publically for the opulent gatherings held in his home's ballroom, and privately for his extramarital amorous exploits. He forms a quick attachment to Ellen.

JULIUS BEAUFORT

I was out in Madison Square and I met the Countess. I insisted she let me walk her home.

(Scene 3)

MRS. ARCHER

Newland's widowed mother. She is very kind and respectable with an inclination to make sure she hears about all of the drama but never to be embroiled in drama herself. She is an expert on social standing and how to leverage it.

MRS. ARCHER

Of course I'm going to help! She is the granddaughter of Mrs. Mingott, a pillar of New York society, and into whose family you're about to marry. Since we, the Archers, don't have the stature necessary to enforce attendance, we have but a single line of recourse: we must go see the van der Luydens.

(Scene 5)

MR. & MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

Cousins of the Archers. They are a powerful older couple with a distant European aristocratic background and enough sway to make others their social lead. They generally prefer a quieter

life removed from bustling and gossip, and are believers in the older customs of hospitality and social decorum.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

You may have seen the news that Luisa's cousin, the Duke of St. Austrey, arrives next week on the Russia. We are having a little dinner for him here. I'm sure Luisa will be as glad as I if the Countess will let us include her in our guests... If we don't all stand together, there will be no such thing as society left.

(Scene 6)

MONSIEUR RIVIERE

An easy-going Frenchman, encountered by Newland in Paris. He is willing to spout his held philosophies of individualism, freedom of thought, and maintaining a personal sense of morality.

MONSIEUR RIVIERE

I want to look life in the face and say what I see, no fear of the mob's ideas. Such freedom is worth life in a garret.

(Scene 6)

DALLAS

Son of Newland, and a product of the modern era. He is a kind and thoughtful son on the brink of marrying the fiancée he has chosen out of love and not status.

DALLAS

... your generation knew more about each other's private thoughts than mine will ever have time to figure out about ours.

(Scene 32)