

The characters in the novellas

The following are the main characters from each novella:

<i>False Dawn</i>	
Halston Raycie	Mrs Raycie
Lewis	Sarah Anne
the narrator	Mary Adeline
John Selwyn	Treeshy Kent
	Louisa Raycie
	Netta Kent
	Narrator's mother
	Alethea Raycie

<i>The Old Maid</i>	
James Ralston	Delia Ralston (nee Lovell)
Joe Ralston	Charlotte Lovell
Clement Spender	Tina Lovell
Lanning Halsey	young Delia Ralston
Dr Lanskill	

<i>The Spark</i>	
Hayley Delane	Leila Delane (nee Gracy)
Bolton Byrne	
Bill Gracy	
Jack Alstrop	
Narrator	
General Scole	
Major Detrancy	
Colonel Ruscott	
Mr Broad	

<i>New Year's Day</i>	
Henry Prest	Mother of narrator
Narrator	Lizzie Hazeldean
Sillerton Jackson	Mrs Parrett
Hubert Wesson	Sabina Wesson
Charles Hazeldean	Susan
	Cecilia Winter
	Mrs Struthers
	Mrs Mant

Questions on the Characters

1. Look through the lists to see if you gain any impressions of the characters from their names or if you are reminded about particular aspects of their character from seeing their name.
2. Look back to see if the narrator is a character in the story or not; why do you think Wharton has made this choice in each case? What difference does it make to the novella?
3. What difference does it make whether the narrator is male or female or an unknown omniscient speaker?
4. Are there more male or female roles in each novella? Why do you think this is?
5. How big a role does each character play in the text, both literally and metaphorically? What is their influence?
6. Can you make any comparisons between the characters in the different novellas? In what ways are the characters similar?
7. Can you draw any comparisons between the narrators in the novellas?
8. Overall, can you say what sort of characters the men are and what sort the women are? In other words, can you generalise about the type of people Wharton is writing about in these texts? Do you, for example, feel that all, or some, of the men are old-fashioned in their outlook? Which characters are different? Why and to what effect?