

Who has more power  
in 'the collector':  
clegg or miranda?



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The Collector by John Fowles examines a battle for power and control between the introverted character of Clegg and the audaciously articulate Miranda. Power is defined as the possession of control, authority, or influence over others (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) that Clegg has been cheated of his entire life. Clegg was brought up with a poor education and little money, lacking any sort of affectionate relationships. Clegg, maybe for these reasons has a clear lack of sanity that causes a platonic addiction to the beautiful art student Miranda. Ultimately alluding to the abduction of Miranda once he wins a great sum of money, allowing Clegg to keep her captive in his basement cellar. Clegg's insanity is the reason he keeps Miranda as a possession of beauty, much like one of the butterflies in his collection, obtaining complete physical power over her. The depiction of Miranda and Clegg's relationship provokes the theme of power in multiple aspects of physicality, economically, of beauty, and verbally. Undeniably manifesting the question of who possesses more power, Miranda or Clegg?

The most prominent and evident aspect of power throughout the novel is physical power, in which Clegg solely possesses. Before Clegg kidnapped Miranda, he never maintained power over anyone especially the people he cares about, as his mother abandoned him, and both his father and dear uncle died. Clegg's former powerlessness seems to have induced him to desire a higher level of power that he obtains by capturing Miranda. He is able to abduct Miranda and possess her physical power due to the fact that he wins an immense sum of money, allowing him to purchase a house, thus the ability to maintain her. Clegg thereby controls every physical aspect of Miranda's life; when she can shower, eat, go outside, how she lives her life,

and even how she dies. This blatant aspect of control that Clegg hordes, entitles him to feel connected with Miranda, furthermore in possession of her. Along with his physical power, he also gains economic power over her. He believes he has a chance to win over her love by buying her whatever she desires ranging from expensive food delicacies to artwork and supplies. He employs his economic power over Miranda as a tool to magically make her fall in love with him, only further demonstrating the lack of sanity. Clegg feeds off of the economic and physical power he holds over Miranda, feeling entitled to a position of power that has been absent from his entire life. Moreover, he begins to feel heroic for being able to suffice Miranda with whatever she desires. Miranda begins to seem subordinate, powerless to Clegg, as she constantly has to ask him when she can have a bath, when she can go outside, and overall becomes dependent on him. The fact that Miranda must turn to Clegg for all the vital necessities of life, ensure Clegg that he has complete control over her. Perhaps, fulfilling a life long sense of thirst to have unabridged control of his environment, and the life it involves. Especially being able to capture and control beauty as he does with his study of lepidoptery, seeing Miranda as a beautiful goddess in the form that all of society desire to possess.

All though Clegg possesses unquestionable economic and physical power over Miranda, she possesses powerful beauty both verbally and physically that has an inordinate impact on Clegg. Miranda's beauty can be interpreted by the viewer as a sense of power that she holds over Clegg as it lingers over his mindset like a controlling fog. In the sense that even when Miranda speaks to Clegg in a disgusting manner or acts exactly as he despises, he

subconsciously excuses her putrid actions as he literally sees her as an enchanting personification of perfection. For example, " even when she did things considered ugly, like yawning or stretching, she made it seem pretty. The truth was she couldn't do ugly things. She was too beautiful." (The Collector, Page 48.) This quote may be more enlightening to the reader than what comes to mind at first as it applies to the overall relationship between Clegg and Miranda. The syntax of this salient quote describes ' the truth' as her inability to do ugly things, which gives the reader insight into Clegg's perception of Miranda. Possibly interpreted as Clegg feeling eternally inferior to her as he recognizes her immaculate beauty, but controversially that "... he doesn't have what it is girls look for" (The Collector, page 11). Yet, his entirely consuming infatuation with Miranda continues to flourish. In addition, Miranda is easily able to express her emotions and thoughts through ardent language, especially her opinions on Clegg's " killing of beautiful life". Miranda despises Clegg's lack of inner-depth of life. Since Miranda has a high level of education and very keenly observes Clegg, she uses her articulate verbal strength to deprecate Clegg, abating his sense of esteem and thereby inner confidence and power. His character is very weak in the sense that he easily conforms to Miranda's beliefs and manipulation. Clegg lacks the ability to express his emotions or thoughts verbally, particularly without offending his beloved Miranda. It seems as if he instead tends to stay quiet, constituting Miranda's words and beliefs as his own, even when she belittles him. Thus Clegg's lack of confidence or verbal power to express himself antithetically conflicts with Miranda's character that has an eloquent, educated manner of speech that empowers her to take jurisdiction in any of their interactions.

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In spite of the fact that Miranda has a manipulative verbal power over Clegg, she struggles immensely near the end of the book to maintain this power, which she relied upon as a latent technique of escape. Clegg's lack of reality and sanity is continuously depicted through out the novel becoming a plausible asset to Miranda's escape ideas. The reader understands that Clegg does not have a grip on reality as he is built upon euphemisms, claiming Miranda is ' his guest' instead of realistically his prisoner. He thereby abates the severity of the situation he has put Miranda in. Clegg's oblivious perspective on the truth of his and Miranda's relationship is a weakness on his part that entitles Miranda to a certain power. She is able to seduce him to believe he stands a chance to win her love, due to his illogical perspective. This seduction hopefully perchance leading to an action of good morality from his side of " the many" as John Fowles would say, by liberating her. When Miranda fails to be set free by her utilization of Clegg's irrationality to become his ideal ' butterfly', she approaches a vastly different method of manipulation. She mistakenly tries to sexually seduce Clegg right before she becomes dangerously ill. This act on Miranda's behalf caused a momentous change in the battle for power within the novel. Clegg now sees her as " no better than a common street woman" as he comes to the realization that she is just like any other foolish, ordinary woman. Who fits perfectly in his narrowly perceived category of desperate women utilizing their bodies much like a whore to achieve what they want. As The Verbal Struggle for Power stated; " The way Clegg talks to her and treats her from that moment changes. ...She can feel that she has no longer the power she had before. Now Clegg is more self-confident, he can say ' no' to Miranda, which he almost could not do earlier." As soon as Miranda offers herself to <https://assignbuster.com/who-has-more-power-in-the-collector-clegg-or-miranda/>

Clegg sexually, she loses all the power she inflicted on him before as he feels she is subordinate to him. This decisive act on Clegg's part to show supremacy over her, allows him to accumulate exactly the key power he is missing earlier in their relationship. Triggering his harsh tone of language that shows Miranda who is the boss, fulfilling his need to feel overwhelmed by power and control, which he so desperately hunted for his entire life.

All in all, the novel portrays how Miranda's verbal power over Clegg and her beauty vanishes the minute she mentally gives up and uses what seems to her as the only way out, 'sex'. From that moment on Clegg procures the confidence and control that he needed all along to feel empowered. Clegg always proclaimed his fascination with Miranda as love, however it appears that his consequential disgust and denigration of Miranda is not love. That he is happier now that he possesses exhaustive control over Miranda, drunk from physical, economic, and verbal power. Clegg's pathological infatuation with the power he has over Miranda results in his abuse of power, obtaining Miranda as an object of his control that invariably leads to her death.