

The hurdles crosses
by clarissa in mrs.
dalloway and doris in
the artificial silk...



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Throughout the stories of Mrs. Dalloway and The Artificial Silk Girl, both female characters, Clarissa and Doris carry different goals and ambitions regarding the life that they wish to live. Each of their life journeys further defines their character and gives special meaning to the choices they make. It is evident that the fulfillment of these goals is something that both Doris and Clarissa find challenging. Although they may have not reached a desirable end point, it is the journey itself that allows them to learn and grow into the person they eventually become.

In The Artificial Silk Girl, Doris packs up her bag in route to Berlin with the hopes of soon living an upscale life filled with money and materialistic items. She finds that there is no way of chasing her dreams within the confinement of her hometown and looks towards the city of Berlin as an outlet of opportunity. It is here, that she uses men as a method of climbing her way up the social ladder. She wishes to find a man that will provide her with money, love and support. Doris takes full advantage of the many men she finds throughout her time in Berlin, manipulating them to get exactly what she wants. Doris believes that she can find complete happiness with someone who can lavish her with the finer things. As she puts on a facade of confidence she travels around the city searching for just that.

Doris' pursuit for glitz and glamour starts hitting rock bottom as she finds herself broke and homeless. She turns to men as her only source of help and rescue. She starts facing the harsh reality that these goals and dreams may be far beyond her reach. Just like Doris, the city is run down and in a time of despair. It simply isn't able to provide her this desirable life style she dreamt of. Things begin to brighten up as she meets a man named Ernst who

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provides her with a home and a type of care she has never experienced. As she starts to notice that things between them would simply not work, she comes to a realization that faking your way through life will only lead you to a dead end. She finally realizes that being someone you're not will prevent you from ever achieving any sort of genuine happiness. Ernst also shows her that real love and happiness exist beyond any sort of materialistic item.

Although Doris' journey to the big city doesn't end as planned, it certainly served an important purpose to her life as a whole. Doris proved herself as a woman of drive and determination for chasing her dreams. Leaving her home at such a young age with the determination to change her life defines Doris as a type of new woman during this time period. Along the way she was able to evolve her morals and values for the better. Her exploration and time spent in the city teaches her that in order to live your life to the fullest you must embrace and accept who you are as a person.

Clarissa on the other hand lives a drastically different and somewhat "stable" lifestyle. Holding the role of a 1920s, London house wife, Clarissa finds herself questioning the life she has chosen. Marrying Richard and becoming Mrs. Dalloway was just the easy way of gaining balance and stability. While she thinks back on her youth, mostly with Peter, she remembers a feeling of bliss and happiness that she feels no longer exist. Clarissa masks her sadness and depression with a smile, telling herself that this is how her life is supposed to be.

As the book begins Clarissa's wakes up with set plans of hosting a party. She immediately states that she will buy the flowers herself, even though she

could easily have it done for her. Just like Doris, Clarissa's exploration of the city reflects the ideals of the "new women". Traveling into the city to accomplish the task on her own gives Clarissa a sense of independence she desires, while remaining in the bounds of her housewife role. Clarissa wishes that her life had turned out differently. She feels trapped in the role of a "perfect housewives". Her remembrance of the past causes her to question if she is even happy with her current lifestyle.

The city was a place of commotion. It was loud, colorful, and lively. She enjoyed going in to the city because it made her feel the way she did when she was younger, happy with little limitation standing in her way. In the city, everyone was busy, free to move where they wanted and when they wanted. Clarissa feels somewhat free as she is infiltrated with her surroundings. It gives her a form of escape. As Woolf writes in great detail we are able to imagine the city the way Clarissa sees it. "And then, opening her eyes, how fresh like frilled linen clean from a laundry laid in wicker trays, the roses looked" (Woolf 13). On Clarissa's journey into London she learns that beauty and freedom still exist. She finds joy in the little things as she travels up and down the city streets. London was like a fine piece of art. It set her mind free and reminded her of all the reasons to live.

Although both of their journeys into the city are extremely different they both lend the characters a way of achieving their desired sense of independence. Doris, wishes to somehow obtain a whole new life style filled with glamour and glitz, while Clarissa uses the city as a different form of escape. She knows her life must stay in its stable place but exploring the city simply reminds her of a time where she was not restricted to do so. It gives

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her evidence that freedom and beauty still exist in a life where she feels no happiness at all. Doris and Clarissa both end up right where they started as soon as they return but it is the information they acquire along these journeys that give way to a deeper meaning in each of their complex and dynamic lives.