



0. CLARISSA VAUGHAN - Story Preface

1. VIRGINIA WOOLF

2. LEONARD WOOLF

3. VIRGINIA WOOLF'S SUICIDE

4. LAURA BROWN

5. CLARISSA VAUGHAN

When Virginia Woolf was thirteen, she lost her Mother (who reportedly died of influenza-related heart failure). The future author learned, early on, that the broken pieces of life can not always be reattached. She remembers the last time that she saw her Mum (who, in her youth, had served as a model for paintings such as "The Princess Sabra Led to the Dragon," 1866, and "The Annunciation," 1879):

"And there is my last sight of her; she was dying; I came to kiss her and as I crept out of the room she said: 'Hold yourself straight, my little goat.'" (See Woolf's *A Sketch of the Past* at pages 18-19 in the online version of *The Virginia Woolf Reader*.)

In this image we see Virginia ("Jinny") with Julia Jackson Duckworth Stephen in 1884. Virginia would have been around two years old at the time.

Fictional Clarissa Vaughan, another Michael Cunningham creation, shares her first name with the title character in Virginia Woolf's novel (*Mrs. Dalloway*). Vaughan also shares Dalloway's love of parties and her preoccupation with a man who commits suicide.

Woolf's Clarissa is obsessed with a soldier whom she has heard about but has never met: Septimus Warren Smith. A shell-shocked World War I veteran, Smith cannot return to the life he had before the war.

Although he endured frightful battles, he is unable to cope with society's confinements. He ends his life rather than attempting an unsuccessful return to a world that, for him, has irrevocably changed.

Cunningham's Clarissa is a modern woman who lives and works in New York City. Her disease-ravaged former lover—Richard—is fighting a losing battle with AIDS. A respected poet, Richard can no longer live the life he had before his illness.

Although he has endured frightful bouts of pain and anguish, he is unable to cope with society's expectations of him. He ends his life rather than accepting an award he thinks he won because of his illness not his genius.

Although Laura Brown and Clarissa Vaughan live during different times, they unknowingly share a bond which goes well beyond their love of Virginia Woolf's book:

- One woman shattered her life to live a dream;
- The other unwittingly tried to put the pieces back together.

Life ... unfortunately ... doesn't always allow for those broken pieces to become reattached.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CLARISSA-VAUGHAN-The-Hours>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/CLARISSA-VAUGHAN-The-Hours>