

# Year 8 English – Rebecca Project

Alice M has produced some character files for her project on Rebecca.

## Rebecca Notes

Name: Rebecca de Winter

Age: Deceased

Relevance: A constant haunting presence throughout the book, essential to the plot

Traits: Sadistic, psychopathic, manipulative, remorseless

Symbol: Blood-red rhododendron

"...at the end of each of her personal letters she put her signature, 'Rebecca', that tall sloping R dwarfing its fellows." - the narrator

"'Yes,' he said slowly, 'yes, I suppose she was the most beautiful creature I ever saw in my life.'" - Frank Crawley

"'You're not like the other one,' he said... 'Tall and dark she was. She gave you the feeling of a snake. I seen her here with me own eyes. Be night she'd come. I'd seen her.' He paused, watching me intently. I did not say anything. 'I looked in on her once,' he said, 'and she turned on me, she did. 'You don't know me, do you?' she said. 'You've never seen me here and you won't again. If I catch you looking at me through the windows here I'll have you put to the asylum,' she said. 'You wouldn't like that, would you? They're cruel to people in the asylum,' she said. 'I won't say nothing, Ma'am,' I said... 'She's gone now, ain't she?' he said anxiously. 'I don't know who you mean,' I said slowly... Poor wretch, he was potty, of course. He did not know what he was talking about. It was hardly likely that anyone would threaten him with the asylum.'" - Ben, Rebecca and the narrator

"'You see,' she said, snapping the top, and walking down the stairs, 'you are so very different from Rebecca.'" - Beatrice

"'Our marriage was a farce from the very first. She was vicious, damnable, rotten through and through. We never loved each other, never had one moment of happiness together. Rebecca was incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency.'" - Max de Winter

"'No one got the better of her, never, never,' she said. 'She did what she liked, she lived as she liked...she cared for nothing and for no one. And then she was beaten in the end. But it wasn't a man, it wasn't a woman. The sea got her. The sea was too strong for her. The sea got her in the end.'" - Mrs Danvers

"'How could I come to you when I knew you were thinking about Rebecca?' I said. 'How could I ask you to love me when I knew you loved Rebecca still?'"

"'It would have been so easy. One false step, one slip. You remember the precipice. I frightened you, didn't I? You thought I was mad. Perhaps I was. Perhaps I am. It doesn't make for sanity, does it, living with the devil.'" - Max de Winter

"'I'll run your house for you,' she told me, 'I'll look after your precious Manderley for you, make it the most famous show-place in all the country, if you like. And people will visit us, and envy us, and talk about us; they'll say we are the luckiest, happiest, handsomest couple in all England. What a leg-pull, Max!' she said, 'what a God-damn triumph!'" - Rebecca

"'She was clever, of course,' he said. 'Damnably clever. No one would guess meeting her that she was not the kindest, most generous, most gifted person in the world...You would have sat at her feet and worshipped her.'" - Max de Winter

Rebecca de Winter was a psychopathic, manipulative, guiltless woman. Even as she was killed, she smiled "that slow smile of hers". She could manipulate anyone into doing anything she wanted, and she was cruel and taunting. At sixteen, she whipped a horse that was said to be too strong for her, and she told Max shamelessly of the affairs she had with other men. Max describes her as "the devil", and is eventually driven to killing her, although he does not know that this was just another of Rebecca's manipulations. However, Rebecca is sometimes interpreted as misunderstood, and the fact she was killed by her own husband is often reproached. Rebecca is seen by some as the heroine of the plot. Red rhododendrons are associated with her because the morning room, Rebecca's room, is the only place where they are present. Also, when the narrator has her dream at the beginning of the book, there are red rhododendrons rising up in the overgrown driveway, suggesting that Rebecca's presence still haunts Max and the narrator.

FLOWER: red rhododendron

### Mrs Van Hopper Notes

Name: Mrs Van Hopper

Age: Mid 60s

Relevance: Key to the initial plot, but irrelevant after the beginning of the book

Traits: Snobbish, narcissistic, gossipy, nosy

Symbol: Lorgnette

"I wonder what my life would be today, if Mrs Van Hopper had not been a snob." - the narrator

"She would precede me in to lunch, her short body ill-balanced upon tottering, high heels, her fussy, frilly blouse a compliment to her large bosom and swinging hips, her new hat pierced with a monster quill aslant upon her head, exposing a wide expanse of forehead bare as a schoolboy's knee. One hand carried a gigantic bag, the kind that holds passports, engagement diaries, and bridge scores, while the other hand totes with that inevitable lorgnette, the enemy to other people's privacy." - the narrator

"Not a single well-known personality, I shall tell the management they must make a reduction on my bill. What do they think I come here for? To look at the page-boys?" - Mrs Van Hopper

"We ate in silence, for Mrs Van Hopper liked to concentrate on food, and I could tell by the way the sauce ran down her chin that her dish of ravioli pleased her." - the narrator

"I blushed for her while she stared..." - the narrator

"He looks ill, doesn't he?" - Mrs Van Hopper

"...she sat at her favourite sofa in the lounge, debating her method of attack." - the narrator

"...I resented the part that I must play in her schemes." - the narrator

"It seemed as though notables must be fed to her, much as invalids are spooned their jelly; and though titles were preferred by her, any face once seen in a social paper served as well. Names scattered in a gossip column, authors, artists, actors, and their kind, even the mediocre ones, as long as she had learnt of them in print." - the narrator

Mrs Van Hopper is a snobbish, nosy, narcissistic character, although she is completely unaware of this. She often sends the narrator out on errands to feed her desire to meet "well-known personalities", most of which acutely embarrass the narrator. She is only mentioned in the first few chapters of the book, but Mrs Van Hopper played a big part in what the narrator's life came to be. Mrs Van Hopper is associated with her lorgnette, as she uses it as "the enemy to other people's privacy".

FLOWER - daffodil (narcissus)

### Max de Winter Notes

Name: Maximilian de Winter

Age: 42

Relevance: Very relevant to most of the book

Traits: Blunt, affectionate, intelligent, independent, opinionated, mildly conceited

Symbol: Manderley

"For some reason I felt impelled to speak, because his eyes followed me in sympathy like the Gentleman Unknown." - the narrator

"'An empty house can be as lonely as a full hotel,' he said at length. 'The trouble is that it is less impersonal.'" - Max de Winter

"I had ill-judged him, he was neither hard nor sardonic, he was already my friend of many years, the brother I had never possessed." - the narrator

"You have blotted out the past for me, you know, far more effectively than all the bright lights of Monte Carlo. But for you I should have left long ago, gone onto Italy, and Greece, and further still perhaps. You have spared me all these wanderings. Damn your puritanical little tight-lipped speech to me. Damn your idea of my kindness and my charity. I ask you to come with me because I want you and your company, and if you don't believe me you can leave the car now and find your own way home." - Max de Winter

"No, I'm asking you to marry me, you little fool." - Max de Winter

"'Damn that woman,' he said. 'She knows perfectly well I did not want this sort of thing.'" - Max de Winter

"Naturally one wants you to be happy, and I grant you he's a very attractive creature but—well, I'm sorry; and personally I think you are making a big mistake—one you will bitterly regret." - Mrs Van Hopper

"I dreaded his going. When I saw the car disappear round the sweep in the drive I felt exactly as though it were to be a final parting and I should never see him again." - the narrator

Max de Winter is a blunt, opinionated man who knows his place and is not afraid to use his authority. Up until he reveals the truth about Rebecca's death to the narrator, he is distant and subdued. Manderley symbolises him because he was prepared to do anything, even marry Rebecca, in order to keep it beautiful. However, sometimes Max is seen as the villain of the book, as he treats women like children and allows the narrator to feel insecure by not telling her that he loves her until near the end, after they have been married for a while. The fact he killed Rebecca is often reproached, as is how he treated the narrator at first by keeping secrets from her. Max de Winter is key to the storyline, but he is not part of every twist in the plot. He is associated with roses because "a rose was one of the few flowers, he said, that looked better picked than growing. A bowl of roses in a drawing-room had a depth of colour and scent they had not possessed in the open...in the house they became mysterious and subtle".

FLOWER - rose

### The Narrator Notes

Name: Unknown (she is referred to in the first person)

Age: 21

Relevance: Extremely relevant to the whole book

Traits: Shy, insecure, affectionate, self-conscious, kind

Symbol: Azalea

"This including of me in the conversation found me at my worst, the raw ex-schoolgirl, red-elbowed and lanky-haired, and I said something obvious and idiotic" - the narrator

"I felt the colour flood into my face...I was stricken with shame." - the narrator

"I can see myself now...with straight, bobbed hair and youthful, unpowered face, dressed in an ill-fitting coat and skirt and a jumper of my own creation" - the narrator

"[I can] see myself as I must have been, standing on the threshold of the house, a slim, awkward figure in my stockinette dress, clutching in my sticky hands a pair of gauntlet gloves." - the narrator

"...she is comparing me to Rebecca." - the narrator

"I would never know, of course, I would never dare to ask." - the narrator

"I saw a little smile of scorn upon her lips, and I guessed at once she considered me ill-bred." - the narrator

"I wondered if I had said the wrong thing. Perhaps it did not do to apologize. Perhaps it lowered me in his estimation." - the narrator

"I wished I knew what to say, what to do. I wondered if he suspected, as Mrs Danvers had done, that poise, and grace, and assurance were not qualities inbred in me, but were things to be acquired, painfully perhaps, and slowly, costing me many bitter moments." - the narrator

"It was always Rebecca, Rebecca, Rebecca. I should never be rid of Rebecca." - the narrator

The narrator is a shy, insecure and self-conscious character, but she is extremely affectionate, particularly towards Maxim. She wants nothing more than to earn his affection and be with him. She is constantly assuming people are criticising her, and a lot of the time that is not true. The narrator has a desperate urge to be widely liked, and feels sorrowfully depressed when she feels this is not the case. She always feels there is a person or thing above her which she is being compared to, and is afraid to say what she truly feels. The narrator is associated with azaleas because she feels at her most calm when she is in the Happy Valley, where azaleas are abundant, and she much prefers them to rhododendrons, which happen to be Rebecca's symbol.

FLOWER - azalea

This is from a Mya who has created an artefact for her Rebecca Project.

