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# The Prime Minister

**Anthony Trollope** · *1876 · original English text*

It is certainly of service to a man to know who were his grandfathers and grandmothers if he entertain an ambition to move in the upper circles of society. Ferdinand Lopez, who opens the book, entertains that ambition. Plantagenet Palliser, now Duke of Omnium, will be asked to form a government. The hosted text is Trollope's original English, Project Gutenberg #2158, complete.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## What happens when a man of uncertain origins climbs by marriage and by nerve into a political world, and when a reluctant duke is made Prime Minister, and how should a school read both plots together?

*"It is certainly of service to a man to know who were his grandfathers and who were his grandmothers if he entertain an ambition to move in the upper circles of society, and also of service to be able to speak of them as of persons who were themselves somebodies in their time."*

Chapter I, Ferdinand Lopez

This is a later Palliser novel, and it is also the story of Ferdinand Lopez and of Emily Wharton. The first chapter is named for Lopez, and begins with ancestry and ambition. Palliser's coalition government, and the private cost of public honor, occupy the other great movement. Teach both, for older students (10–12), with tact. The book is exact about money, marriage, and a name that cannot quite be placed.

KEY CHARACTERS

**Ferdinand Lopez**
*The ambitious man of the opening chapter, whose origins will not stay quiet*

**Emily Wharton**
*Whose marriage and later trouble the book will not forget amid the festivities of office*

**Mr. Abel Wharton, Q.C.**
*Her father, whose judgment Lopez must face*

**Plantagenet Palliser, Duke of Omnium**
*The reluctant Prime Minister, a man of honor in a coalition*

**Lady Glencora, Duchess of Omnium**
*Whose energy and will accompany the duke in office*

A USEFUL KNOWLEDGE OF GRANDFATHERS

> *"It is certainly of service to a man to know who were his grandfathers and who were his grandmothers if he entertain an ambition to move in the upper circles of society, and also of service to be able to speak of them as of persons who were themselves somebodies in their time."*
>
> Chapter I, Ferdinand Lopez

Grades 10–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
## Ferdinand Lopez
CHAPTER I

*The book opens, not on the duke, but on a man for whom ancestry would be of service, if he had it to show. Lopez has ambition, manners, and a past that will not stay quiet.*

- The first sentence is exact, including "grandfathers and who were his grandmothers" and "somebodies in their time"
- Chapter I is titled "Ferdinand Lopez."
- The narrator respects self-made greatness in theory, and still notes what the "offspring" of an unknown line must face
- Do not treat Lopez as a mere villain on the first page; let the book show him

> *"It is certainly of service to a man to know who were his grandfathers and who were his grandmothers if he entertain an ambition to move in the upper circles of society, and also of service to be able to speak of them as of persons who were themselves somebodies in their time."*
>
> Chapter I

02
## The Whartons
THE EARLY CHAPTERS

*Lopez dines with Everett Wharton at the Progress Club, and sets himself to win Emily Wharton against her father's judgment. Mr. Abel Wharton, Q.C., is not easily moved.*

- Chapter II is "Everett Wharton"; Chapter III, "Mr. Abel Wharton, Q.C."
- Emily's troubles must not be forgotten, as a later chapter will remind us, "amidst the gorgeous festivities of the new Prime Minister"
- Teach the marriage plot with tact; it is about truthfulness and a father's care as well as about love
- The club called the Progress is already a sign of a newer political world

03
## The Duke in Office
THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT

*Plantagenet Palliser, Duke of Omnium, is called to the first place in a coalition. He is a man of honor who does not love the display of power. The office will test him, and Lady Glencora with him.*

- This is a Palliser novel; the duke and duchess are already known from earlier books, but this file can still be taught as its own story if the class is prepared
- Public honor and private scruple are the political heart of the book
- Do not reduce the government plot to a backdrop for Lopez
- For older students (10–12)

04
## Money, a Name, and a Fall
THE LATER CHAPTERS

*Lopez's climb has a cost, and a crash. Emily's loyalty and injury, and the duke's government, come to their later reckonings.*

- Teach the crash and its shame with gravity, not as a thrill of ruin
- The book is exact about commercial dishonesty and about social cruelty
- Do not invent a last-minute rescue the later chapters do not give
- Hold the private and the public endings together

05
## The Hosted File
PG #2158

*The hosted text is complete, original English, 1876. A later Palliser novel, and a story of ambition.*

- It may be read after Can You Forgive Her? and the earlier Palliser books, or, with preparation, on its own
- Quote the hosted wording; Chapter I is named for Lopez, not for the duke
- For older students (10–12); money, marriage, and office, taught with tact
- The opening question of ancestry is not a sneer only; it is the book's first test of a man who wishes to move upward

Ambition and Origins | Public Honor | Marriage and Truth | Office and Scruple | Money and a Name | A Father's Care

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. The novel opens: "It is certainly of service to a man to know who were his grandfathers and who were his grandmothers if he entertain an ambition to move in the upper circles of society..." Chapter I is titled "Ferdinand Lopez," not the duke.
2. This is a later Palliser novel, original English, PG #2158, complete. For older students (10–12). Teach both the Lopez marriage-plot and Palliser's government.
3. Emily Wharton's troubles are not to be forgotten "amidst the gorgeous festivities of the new Prime Minister."
4. The book is exact about money, a name that cannot quite be placed, and a crash. Teach the fall with gravity, not as a thrill of ruin.
5. It may be read after Can You Forgive Her? and the earlier Palliser books, or, with preparation, on its own.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #2158, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/trollope-the-prime-minister/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.