

Sketch the Character of Lady Una

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“Spenser’s heroines are idealized types of women in real life.” Do you think that this judgment is valid in respect of Una in Book 1 of “The Faerie Queene”?

Or, Sketch the character of Lady Una.

Lady Una is the heroine of Edmund Spenser’s (1552/53-1599) *“The Faerie Queene” Book 1* (1590). She travels with the Red Cross Knight to rescue her parents, who are trapped by a dragon. She is not just a character in the poem. She represents Truth, Purity, and True Religion. Lady Una is pure, innocent, kind, wise, and full of faith. Spenser presents her as the ideal type of woman. She is a perfect and ideal example of what a good woman should be like in real life. Let us take a closer look at her character.

Beautiful and Humble: Lady Una is very beautiful, but she does not show off her beauty. She is a lovely lady. She is riding on a snow-white donkey beside the knight. Spenser writes:

“A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside”

Una’s skin is whiter than snow, but she hides her face and body with a black cloth. This shows she is modest and humble, even though she is beautiful. She also comes from a royal family, but she does not act proud.

Symbol of Truth, Purity, Innocence: Lady Una is a symbol of truth, purity, and innocence. Her name “Una” means “one” or “unity,” which shows that she represents one true religion—the Protestant Church, in Spenser’s view. Una is shown as pure like a lamb. Spenser portrays her as:

“So pure an innocent, as that same lambe

She was in life and every virtuous lore.”

This means Lady Una is full of virtue. She is pure, innocent, kind, honest, and good in every way. She is simple, gentle, wise, brave, forgiving, and faithful. She has qualities people admire. Perfect in every way, she becomes an ideal version of a real woman.

Brave and Wise: Even though she is soft and gentle, Una is also very brave and wise. When the Red Cross Knight and Lady Una are near a cave, Una says she knows better about the danger of that place. The cave belongs to the vile Monster Error, which looks like half-woman and half-serpent. She warns the knight and says:

"A monster vile, whom God and man does hate:"

This suggests Una is a very wise lady. She knows danger is near, and she gives good advice. But the knight is proud and does not listen. Later, when the knight is almost trapped by Error, it is Una who gives him hope and strength. She says the knight should add faith in his strength. Finally, the knight is able to defeat the monster.

Strong and Faithful: Una stays with the knight, even when times are hard. She supports him, prays for him, and trusts him. The Red Cross Knight leaves her when he is tricked by Archimago. He becomes so angry that,

"He thought have slaine her in his fierce despight:"

However, Una does not give up. She continues her mission alone in a dark forest. This shows she is strong. Even after the knight makes mistakes, she remains faithful. This kind of faithfulness and forgiveness makes her an ideal woman.

Moral and Spiritual Guide: Lady Una acts as the moral and spiritual guide for the Red Cross Knight. When he becomes proud or falls into sin, she brings him back. For example, after he is tricked by Duessa and becomes weak, Una brings him to the House of Holiness. There, he learns how to fight sin and grow in faith. She helps him become better. This is another way Spenser idealizes her—as a woman who helps her man become a true Christian hero.

In conclusion, Una is more than just a female character. She is the image of the perfect woman. She is true, pure, faithful, brave, kind, and forgiving. She is the moral and spiritual guide of the Red Cross Knight. Spenser uses her to show what a good woman and a true believer should be like. So, we can say Spenser's heroines are idealized types of women, like Lady Una.