

The Invisible Woman

2013 | 111mins

Director: Ralph Fiennes

Starring: Ralph Fiennes, Felicity Jones, Joanna Scanlan

In Ralph Fiennes second directorial feature, he brings new life to the classic genre of British period dramas. *The Invisible Woman* follows Nelly Ternan (Felicity Jones), the secret lover of Charles Dickens (Ralph Fiennes) whose existence was once a carefully guarded secret for many decades. Time and place are key to this tale, and audiences are invited to consider the pressures of Victorian society and the underlying suspicion and fear that permeates the lives of the real characters.

Author Claire Tomalin published *The Invisible Woman: The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* in 1990, which details the 13 year love affair between Dickens and Ternan, who was 27 years his junior. The book was then adapted into a film script by Abi Morgan. Fiennes openly admitted that before he came across the script for the film, which he loved, he knew little to nothing about Dickens, having only read *Little Dorrit*. However, after reading Tomalin's book, he was intrigued by the contradictory aspects that made Dickens who he was. In 2011, a lunch was arranged with Tomalin, Morgan and Fiennes following his expression of interest to direct the film. On meeting however, Tomalin was struck by Fienne's resemblance to Dickens and expressed her belief that he was born to play Dickens.

Despite the differences between her biography and the film, Tomalin asserts that the adaptation provides space to examine Dickens in all his ambivalence. Fiennes invites a study of the developments of the ensemble cast and the social norms that dictate their lives. In an interview in 2014, Fiennes stated that for him the film is about "the fragility of relationships and the fragility of intimacy".

Aside from the in-depth analyses of not only the protagonists but their close circles, the composition of the scenery enlightens the inspection of intimacy, enhancing the emotional and psychological pull of the story. The Guardian noted that 'It is not a simple-minded film – it allows for people being complex, changeable, human'.

“The Invisible Woman is one of those evanescent conjurings of a bygone time in which every part serves the whole. The most entrancing and persuasive evocation of Victorian England offered in any recent film, it reflects superb work on the parts of many contributors”

- Godfrey Cheshire



Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!

Did You Know?

- Ralph Fiennes and Felicity Jones had previously appeared in *Cemetery Junction* (2010), in which they played father and daughter.
- *The Invisible Woman* was Tomalin's fourth novel, and it won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1990, and the Hawthornden Prize in 1991.
- *The Invisible Woman* is not the first film related to Charles Dickens Fiennes has acted in; in 2012, he played Abel Magwitch in *Great Expectations*.

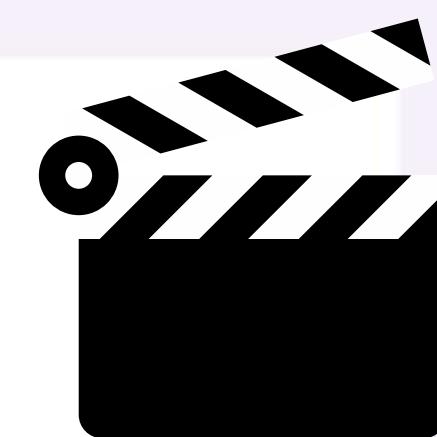
Continue Your Journey...

If you enjoyed this film, you might like:



Effie Gray (2014)

Written by Emma Thompson, the film is based on the true story of Euphemia 'Effie' Gray and famous academic John Ruskin.



Mary Shelley (2017)

Starring Elle Fanning, the film follows writer Mary Wollstonecraft's life and connection to Percy Shelley.

SCAN ME



Tell Us What You Think and Win!

Complete our survey and enter our prize draw with the chance to win a FilmBath Fan Membership and tickets to our Movie at the Museum series in March 2026.

We really value your opinion and your answers are really helpful to help us understand our audiences, improve the festival and apply for funding.

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here



Excellent

Fair

Poor

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!