

Movie Character Analysis  
Legally Blonde  
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Gender, Dress, and Society  
Professor Roberts  
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Legally Blonde is an American classic that proves you can do anything you set your mind to no matter how you look or act. Main character Elle Woods is a rich and popular Californian girl who's majoring in Fashion Merchandising and is the president of the Delta Nu sorority. The film starts with an introduction of the character Elle without exactly showing her face. Viewers are introduced to Elle's morning routine and how she gets ready in the morning while her sorority sisters are signing a card hoping that she gets proposed to at her dinner date with her boyfriend Warner Huntington III. Elle thanks her friends for the card and admits that she doesn't think she'll get engaged but her friends convince her that it's a possibility and she gets excited and decides to buy a new dress for the occasion. But, at the dinner, Warner breaks up with Elle because he needs "a Jackie, not a Marilyn." Elle becomes depressed and stays in her room eating chocolate and watching sad movies. Her friends attempt to cheer her up by taking her to the nail salon but she just sits and sulks until she reads a news article on Warner's older brother who's at Yale law. Elle realizes to be in Warner's life she needs to get into Harvard Law and show him that she can be a "Jackie." For the next few months, Elle works her butt off to get into Harvard and she does. When she arrives at Harvard, she thinks she can easily win back Warner but finds out how he's engaged to another woman. Elle stays at Harvard to continue to win Warner back until he bluntly tells her that she isn't good enough [for him] and won't be able to get into Professor Callahan's law internship. From then on, Elle works her hardest to get high grades and is rewarded with a spot in the internship with her professor alongside Warner and his fiancé, Vivian. Elle, her classmates, and the other members of the law team are tasked to help prove that Brooke Windham, Elle's role model, is innocent of killing her husband. Working late one night, her professor hits on her and tells her that she only got the internship for her looks along with

hopes that she'd sleep with him. Elle quits the internship that night and plans to leave school until one of her friends at the law firm, and Professor Stromwell, convinces her to come back and prove everyone wrong. At the trial, Windham fires Professor Callahan and hires Elle as her new lawyer. Elle struggles in the beginning but with her knowledge on perms, she quickly gets the murderer to admit to the crime.

Costume designer Sophie de Rakoff stated that her and Reese Witherspoon gave Witherspoon's character a signature color (Smith, 2016). They visited sororities one day to determine if pink was the only choice of color for her character to wear and they decided it was. Rakoff created outfits based off the character and how she would think to get ready in the morning. **Figure 1** is a picture of Elle's first day at law school and Rakoff admits to this being one of her favorite looks throughout the movie. She imagined Elle's thought process to be: "... it's on the East Coast so it's chilly, so I need something warm, but [it's] law school and it's professional, so I need a tie, but I want to wear a skirt because I'm a girl" (Smith, 2016). **Figure 2** is a picture of Elle's costume for Vivian's 'costume' party. Rakoff states that Elle is more "fun and flirty than va-va-voom" (Smith, 2016). **Figure 3** is a picture of Elle's first day of her internship at Professor Callahan's law firm; "it's black and professional, but has ruffled blouse and slip peeking out at the bottom that keep things fun" (Smith, 2016). You see her "start to blend in with the Ivy League crowd more and more, but does still maintain her strong, personal style" (Smith, 2016).

Dress is defined as the grouping of body modifications and body supplements a person is wearing at that moment in time. Changes made directly to the body itself are known as body modifications which can be either temporary or permanent (Lennon & Johnson & Rudd, 2017).

Body supplements are items added to the body such as clothing, jewelry, and accessories. Elle Woods had common body modifications like wearing makeup, having ear piercings, and styling her hair. Her body supplements were just as the definition says; wearing clothes, jewelry, and accessories like hats, headbands, and having a purse. All of these determinants helped to build Elle's personality. But, her style shifted once she reached Harvard. Her clothes weren't as bold as they were in California. She went from wearing bright pinks and light colors to wearing darker pinks and darker colors. She styled her hair less and started to wear more hats.

Your social position, ascribed status, and achieved status help to figure out who you are as a person or how you grow to become that person. A social position is where a person stands within a society or culture. An ascribed status is a social position that's basically been given to you since birth and an achieved status is a social position that you've worked for to have. Elle is a popular, young, college student who was raised in Bel-Air. The way her parents raised her shaped how she viewed the world and the things she wanted to obtain. Her parents were wealthy and good looking so they raised her to believe that looks can get you far especially if you have money. For example, she had an amazing fashion wardrobe, a beautiful 2000 Porsche Boxster 986, and was well loved as being president of her sorority Delta Nu. But, her social status in the movie changes once she reaches Harvard. Her peers at law school are no longer similar to the social group she use to surround herself with. These students don't care about fashion or makeup; they care about the news and politics.

An important lesson from this movie is that you shouldn't judge a book by it's cover. Elle Woods was perceived by her peers at law school as a bimbo. They assumed she wasn't that smart because of her bubbly, "California girl" personality and thought that she wouldn't survive at law

school. But, Elle worked super hard to prove everyone wrong. She still maintained who she was as person by going to get her nails done, going shopping, and working out. Even though her style shifted, she added body supplements to give her new law school wardrobe a touch of her personality. Also, very importantly, she has this epiphany toward the end of the movie in which she realizes she can still be herself, wear what she wants, and still be respected within this new environment of being in law school.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3





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