Daisy Miller Study Guide

Daisy Miller by Henry James

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Daisy Miller opens in Vevey, Switzerland, where a young expatriate American named Winterbourne is visiting his aunt. He has lived in Geneva for many years and identifies greatly with his European peers. When the flirtatious New Yorker, Daisy Miller, arrives on the scene, she catches his eye. Even for the relaxed resort environment of Vevey, Daisy's behavior is extreme because she speaks to strange men without the presence of an escort, and she brags about her many male suitors. Winterbourne is entranced by both Daisy's beauty and her coquettish behavior, and even though his aunt warns him that the Millers are of low class in spite of their money and he is determined to spend more time with her. They go sightseeing at the nearby Chillon Castle, where Daisy is more interested in Winterbourne than in exploring the ruins. She demands that he travel with her family, and when he tells her he cannot, she becomes jealous and accuses him of going back to Geneva for another woman.

Winterbourne arrives in Rome in winter, again visiting his aunt, and meets Daisy and her family at the home of Mrs. Walker, a mutual American friend. Daisy again plays the coquette, though in Rome the reaction to her flirtatiousness is much stronger than it was in Vevey. She makes friends with a shady local, Mr. Giovanelli, with whom she scandalously strolls around in public and rumors circulate about her character. Mrs. Walker tries to reason with her but fails, and ultimately shuns Daisy. When Winterbourne attempts to warn Mrs. Miller about her daughter's behavior, she tells him she believes Daisy to be engaged to Giovanelli. Eventually their paths stop crossing, but Winterbourne keeps hearing rumors of the many men who call at Daisy's hotel. One night he takes a midnight stroll near the Colosseum and sees Daisy there alone with Giovanelli. He decides she is not a "nice girl" after all and loses interest in her. Daisy takes ill with malaria, but it is not until after her death that Winterbourne learns she was never engaged to Giovanelli; and was, in fact, innocent of all the things of which she had been accused.

Part 1

Part 1 Summary

In Vevey, Switzerland, a young American named Winterbourne, who has resided in Geneva for a number of years, is visiting his aunt. One morning Winterbourne goes to his aunt's hotel to learn that she is ill and not receiving visitors; whiling away his suddenly free morning, he meets the Miller family of Schenectady, New York - a mother, her younger child Randolph, and her daughter Daisy. Right away, he tags Daisy as a flirt; she is at least friendly, conversing freely with him in spite of the fact that she does not have an escort. Daisy tells him about her family, all the good shopping she'd had since being in Europe, and her busy social life - particularly among men - back in New York.

In keeping with her flirtatious first impression, Daisy quickly agrees to Winterbourne's suggestion that they visit the Chillon Castle together. The family's courier Eugenio freely shows his disapproval, giving Winterbourne a look that suggests that Daisy often goes off with strange men. Winterbourne offers to introduce Daisy to his aunt in order to prove his good intentions. His aunt, Mrs. Costello, has no desire to meet Daisy and explains to Winterbourne that the girl is "common" and thus not fit company. She warns him that he will make a mistake with a girl like that, being innocent because of having been away from America for a long time. Mrs. Costello asserts that her granddaughters, whom Winterbourne knows to be "tremendous flirts," would never behave as Daisy does.

In spite of the warning, Winterbourne is eager to see Daisy again. He finds her in the garden later that same night. Daisy asks when she will meet his aunt, whom she knows a good bit about. Winterbourne tells her his aunt is too ill with headaches to meet her, but Daisy quickly senses his lie.

In the garden, Winterbourne meets Mrs. Miller for the first time. The relationship between Daisy and her mother is a surprising one: Daisy speaks to her mother frankly and Mrs. Miller seems unmoved by the announcement that her daughter plans to go to the castle with a stranger. When Daisy and Winterbourne talk about going out in the boat that very night, Mrs. Miller is at best confused; she enlists Eugenio to tell Daisy she shouldn't go. Daisy turns the discussion of the outing into a game, teasing both the men and playing their separate agendas off one another - Winterbourne's desire to go off alone with her and Eugenio's wish that she behave properly. She admits enjoying the "fuss that she has created but ultimately goes back to the hotel with her family.

Two days later, Winterbourne and Daisy take the steamer to the castle. On the boat, Daisy is her usual chatty self and pokes fun at Winterbourne for being too serious. Winterbourne is pleased that the other passengers notice how pretty Daisy is and that she doesn't socialize with any of them. Inside the castle, Daisy is more interested in finding out about Winterbourne's history than the history of the castle, and she spends a

good bit of time talking about herself. She asks him to travel around with her family, but he tells her he will soon have to return to Geneva. Daisy grows agitated at the prospect of his leaving and accuses Winterbourne of going back to Geneva to be with another woman. She asks that he come see her in Rome in the winter, but when he responds that he already plans to go there to see his aunt, she demands that he come solely for her.

Part 1 Analysis

Part One introduces many of the novel's central themes, particularly the theme of innocence - or the appearance of it. In fact, the tension between what appears to be and what *is* drives much of the story's action. It is established early through Mrs. Costello that Daisy is coarse and a flirt, but Winterbourne does not have to be told this. He is interested in Daisy because she is "wonderfully pretty and, in short...very nice" - not because she is an interesting conversationalist. In fact, it would seem to be to Winterbourne's advantage that Daisy is not as innocent as she looks, because he wants to spend time alone with her - which he could not do with a truly "nice girl." He is intrigued by the uncertainty of her character, and he pursues her because of the possibility that she is *not* a nice girl. On closer look, Winterbourne, who gives every other appearance of being a well-bred gentleman, has questionable morals when measured by the societal standards against which Daisy is being judged. One wonders about the nature of his relationship with the older woman in Geneva.

The question of Daisy's innocence hinges on the long-established social rules the characters play by, particularly governing relations between the sexes. In Vevey, the strict social conventions for male/female interactions are somewhat relaxed because it is an international resort town. However, a code of behavior still exists, and Daisy breaks it at every turn. Well-bred young ladies may not consort with strange men without an escort; Daisy does so freely and in public, so doubt is cast on her character and others wonder what she might be guilty of doing in private. On the surface she fits into society; her financial situation and the fact that she "dresses in perfection" just barely gain her entry. Her behavior is deemed unacceptable, and it is significant to note that Mrs. Costello's granddaughters, presumably well-bred New York ladies, are known by Winterbourne to be at least as flirtatious as Daisy is judged to be.

The Millers are deemed to be brash, uneducated and uncultivated - the stereotypical American "new money" that Mrs. Costello says "one does one's duty by not accepting." They treat their courier Eugenio as one of the family, and Daisy and Randolph both speak to their mother, as well as total strangers, with a shocking bluntness. Daisy's character, or lack of it, thus seems partially tied to economics. The truth about her innocence is elusive, just as her true place in society is ambiguous.

Part One also sets up an important tension between the Americans and the Europeans that colors much of James' fiction. The Millers fail to properly appreciate Europe's ancient charms, symbolized by the ruins of the Chillon Castle and Daisy's lack of interest in exploring it. They also fail to carry themselves as discreetly or with as much

dignity as society demands. This is particularly true for Daisy, with her fondness for spending time alone with strange men. The question is then raised: Is Daisy immoral because she disobeys the societal rule about being seen alone with a man? Does she even know what she is doing is wrong? She herself seems uninterested in clarifying the point; she admits that she enjoys the society of men, but nothing else in her behavior proves that she has done or plans to do anything wrong. Rather, she seems more interested in creating a "fuss," playing Winterbourne's desire for her off Eugenio's desire for her to behave. After all, given the chance to row over to the castle with Winterbourne one night, she opts to return to the hotel with her family. Society does not need physical proof that Daisy has committed a moral indiscretion, however. Her behavior, which makes her appear to be an uncultivated flirt, is enough to label her an outsider.

Winterbourne is unconcerned with Daisy's failure to fit into society. He only wants to spend time with her and uncover the mystery of her character. It is clear that the ambiguity surrounding Daisy pleases him, and he is far less interested in protecting her reputation than in being alone with her. In fact, Winterbourne's relationship with Daisy reveals an important double standard that even the female characters accept. Daisy is the object of gossip because she goes around with men. However, when Winterbourne tells his aunt that he took Daisy to the castle, Mrs. Costello reacts as though the wrongdoing is Daisy's, not his.

Part 2

Part 2 Summary

In the winter of that same year, Winterbourne arrives in Rome to visit his aunt, who is vacationing there for several weeks. His aunt reports that the Millers are there too. Winterbourne says that he will go see them, but his aunt warns him that Daisy has been seen with low-class locals and is causing much gossip among the Americans. He defends Daisy and her family as "not bad" in spite of their lack of cultivation, but the news that she has been entertaining men makes him question the impression he made on her in Vevey. Instead of seeing her first, he visits other friends.

At the home of Mrs. Walker, an American he knew in Geneva, Winterbourne runs into the Millers. Daisy accuses him of avoiding her and then teasingly goes off to speak to the hostess, leaving Winterbourne chatting with Mrs. Miller. She, too, describes Daisy's exploits in the city, though without the disapproving tone of Mrs. Costello; in fact, she seems to think it quite normal that Daisy is enjoying the city as she is.

Daisy asks Mrs. Walker's permission to bring a gentleman, Mr. Giovanelli, to her party. Mrs. Walker hesitantly agrees. Daisy also announces late in the afternoon that she is going to walk at the Pincian Garden, a place to stroll and socialize, with Mr. Giovanelli, but the other women warn her that doing so would be unsafe and unhealthy at that hour. Winterbourne agrees to go with her but decides not to leave her alone with Giovanelli. This amuses Daisy, who is not bothered by the way Giovanelli stares at a carriage full of women. The three of them stroll together, with Winterbourne noting how practiced the Italian is at conversing with American women.

Soon Mrs. Walker pulls up in her carriage and tries to get Daisy into the carriage with her. She says Daisy has disgraced herself by walking around with two men. Daisy refuses to get into the carriage or listen to Mrs. Walker's reasoning, but Winterbourne eventually agrees that she should go with the older woman. In response, Daisy strides away with Giovanelli. Mrs. Walker then tells Winterbourne more about the stir Daisy is causing in Rome, particularly at the hotel, where male visitors appear late at night asking for her. She asks Winterbourne to stay away from Daisy, but he refuses. Getting out of Mrs. Walker's carriage, Winterbourne goes on with his walk in the Garden. He sees Daisy and Giovanelli, who takes her parasol and uses it to shield them from view.

A few days later, Daisy shows up with Giovanelli at Mrs. Walker's party. Winterbourne asks Daisy to stop seeing Giovanelli, warning that the locals will misinterpret her spending time with such a man. Winterbourne would prefer she flirt with him instead. He jokes about Daisy and Giovanelli being in love with each other, and Daisy declares this a "disagreeable" thing to say. Mrs. Walker refuses to speak to Daisy, and much to Winterbourne's surprise, Daisy appears hurt by this.

At St. Peter's Mrs. Costello comments that Winterbourne seems preoccupied, presumably by thoughts of Daisy. She warns him that the little coquette, though most likely having no real intentions of doing anything, might let herself become engaged to Giovanelli. Meanwhile, Mrs. Costello's acquaintances gossip about Daisy going "too far." Winterbourne acknowledges to himself that she appears to be doing just that. At the same time, he feels sorry for her.

Winterbourne decides to warn Mrs. Miller about Daisy's behavior, but she believes Daisy to be engaged and thus not in any danger. Gradually, he and Daisy stop crossing paths because their mutual friends stop inviting her places. When he runs into her at the Palace of the Caesars, he tells her that she is becoming unwelcome among the Americans, but she turns the tables - berating him for not standing up for her. He reports the rumor of her engagement, and she teases him by first saying she is engaged and then saying she isn't.

A week later, near midnight, Winterbourne runs into Daisy and Giovanelli again at the Colosseum. He finally decides she is not the nice girl he thought she was and starts to leave; but Daisy sees him and accuses him of going away without speaking to her. He no longer believes in her innocence or in his ability to hurt her. He scolds her for exposing herself to the night air, known to cause malaria, and they part ways.

Winterbourne loses interest in the gossip about Daisy until he learns that she has fallen ill. Mrs. Miller passes on a message from Daisy in which she denies that she was ever engaged to Giovanelli and asks if Winterbourne remembers their trip to the castle in Switzerland. Shortly after this Daisy dies, and at her funeral Winterbourne confronts Giovanelli, who proclaims her innocence.

A year later, visiting his aunt again in Vevey, Winterbourne confesses to her that, as she had warned, he made a mistake with Daisy and did her an injustice. Still, he has no choice but to go on with his life in Geneva, where rumors circle of his pursuing a "clever foreign lady."

Part 2 Analysis

A change in setting occurs in Part Two, with Winterbourne and the Millers heading separately to Rome. Immediately upon arriving, Winterbourne finds that Daisy is again inspiring gossip, though in Rome it is much more vicious. The consequences threaten to be greater than they were in Vevey because Daisy's friendship with the dandy, Mr. Giovanelli, a shady local, has been playing out everywhere from public parks to St. Peter's.

The atmosphere in Rome is stifling, both in a literal and a figurative sense. The humid air outside is fever-inducing, parties are held in cramped rooms, and the other characters try to thwart any attempt on Daisy's part to enjoy herself. The American expatriates in Rome form a world all of their own, one that is closed to outsiders, and with even more rigid social rules than in Vevey. Mrs. Walker's home thus creates a kind

of microcosm of wealthy American society in Rome. The fact that Mrs. Walker is happy to open her doors to a "family friend" of the Millers but hedges when she learns that Daisy's friend has been only recently picked up, indicates the society's unwillingness to embrace "outsiders" - an irony because they are foreigners.

Part Two ramps up the urgency in the story considerably. Daisy could be viewed as merely testing the social restrictions in Vevey, she becomes an outright violator in the unforgiving social climate of Rome. Unlike Vevey, Rome is very old, a city of long-held tradition and long-admired culture. Its landmarks, streets, and culture are all old, making the recently wealthy and uncultivated Millers seem like alien upstarts. In this setting, the theme of appearance versus reality is evident once again, as Winterbourne attempts to solve the mystery of Daisy's character and as Daisy attempts to live her life among the strict social rules and harsh scrutiny of the other characters. By now, it has become clear that Winterbourne and Daisy admire each other, but Winterbourne's behavior indicates to Daisy that he is not interested. His delay in calling on her signals a lack of interest that she chides him for, even though Winterbourne skipped Bologna and Florence on his way to Rome, a sign that he was eager to see her again. As the narrator tells us, however, he delays seeing her because he is jealous that she has been seeing other men. He had thought he had impressed her enough to make her wait for him, but this perception is shattered by the reality, as Mrs. Costello reports, that she has been going around with several locals, each of whom has "a good deal of manner and a wonderful mustache."

Daisy, too, is guilty of an inability to see things as they really are. Her lack of cultivation makes the local Roman fortune hunters seem like quality society and she falls for Mr. Giovanelli's slick manner, mistaking him for a suitable companion. Winterbourne's rash judgment of the situation further clouds matters. When Giovanelli uses Daisy's parasol to shield them from view, Winterbourne finally begins to doubt her innocence. Even at Mrs. Walker's party, to which Daisy brings Giovanelli, she seems more interested in spending time with Winterbourne than Giovanelli, but Winterbourne obsesses over her relationship with the other man. She declares his barb that she and Giovanelli are in love to be a disagreeable thing to say. Still, Winterbourne chooses to read the appearance of things as truth; for example, Daisy describes Winterbourne as stiff and says that she would like to make him angry - when in fact her feelings are just the opposite.

Daisy also offers another perspective on the tension between appearance and reality in this story. When Winterbourne accuses her of being a flirt, she counters, saying, "I'm a fearful, frightful flirt! Did you ever hear of a nice girl that was not?" To Daisy, flirtation is evidence that nothing improper is going on; to the rest of society, it means the opposite. How things appear to one person can be a completely different thing in the eyes of another. How does one as uncultivated as Daisy sort it out? How is Winterbourne, caught between two possible truths, to make a decision if his only "evidence" lies in what appears to be?

Though there still may be doubt in the reader's mind about Daisy's virtue at this point, Winterbourne makes his final decision about her rashly, with no real new evidence.

Seeing Daisy with Giovanelli at the Colosseum, he decides that no "nice girl" would let herself be seen outside and with a man to whom she is not related, at such a late hour. Although Winterbourne had earlier proclaimed Giovanelli a villain, and Daisy the clueless innocent, Winterbourne now feels that Daisy is a woman with full disregard for social propriety. He condemns her, abandoning her both to the advances of Mr. Giovanelli and to the mosquito-infested air that ultimately kills her. This scene, played out in the shadow of the great ruin of the Colosseum, which was the site of atrocious violence in the past, foreshadows Daisy's own ruin at the end of the novel. Her recklessness ultimately ruins her, but it is Winterbourne who chooses to, figuratively, throw her to the lions. He chooses to side with people like Mrs. Costello, who make judgments based on gossip, and punish suspected nonconformists with ostracism.

After Daisy's death Winterbourne discovers that he has made a mistake; when Giovanelli reveals that Daisy was in fact innocent, Winterbourne's assumptions about both of them are proven wrong. His response in the novel's last few lines is therefore interesting: He tells his aunt that he "did her an injustice;" however, his guilt over the incident could not have been very great because he returns to Geneva, where he goes on having mysterious relationships with foreign women and inspiring more "contradictory" reports of his exploits.

Characters

Winterbourne

An American in his late twenties, Winterbourne is long-time resident of Geneva who meets the title character on a visit to Vevey. The story is told from his point of view. The beginning of the novel paints him as a man who enjoys the company of women and hints that he is in a relationship with an older woman back in Geneva. It is not surprising, then, that he becomes entranced by the young, vivacious and very pretty Daisy Miller.

Winterbourne is attracted to Daisy's socially iconoclastic behaviors. She repeatedly subverts every ideal of proper feminine behavior, from her forwardness with men, to the frankness and assertiveness with which she addresses her mother, to her utter lack of regard for popular opinion. Deciphering Daisy's actions becomes a kind of game for Winterbourne, one that plays out to the very end of the novel. Even after her death, he fails to truly understand her, and this ambiguity is an important stimulus for his character's development.

Never is it stated that Winterbourne loves Daisy; however, his lust for her is evident. Though he is well aware that it is somewhat improper for a single woman to socialize alone with a man, he courts her openly, ignoring the gossip about her reputation. He does not seem interested in a serious relationship with her feeling that, "he should enjoy deucedly 'going off' with her somewhere." Nor does he seem interested in playing society's game about proper male/female relations. While gossip swirls about Daisy's solo walks with the shady Mr. Giovanelli in Rome, Winterbourne warns her of the man's questionable intentions yet seems all too willing to take his place.

Upon discovering Daisy out at midnight at the Colosseum, Winterbourne finally writes her off as truly low class. He makes an important assumption about her character based on gossip and a few examples of witnessed behavior, and this judgment costs him in the end. Her death raises many questions about the possibilities for their relationship had he refrained from judging her. Thus, the end of the novel shows a Winterbourne who has grown somewhat and learned a number of things about human relationships, not the least of which is that people are not always what they seem.

Daisy Miller

Daisy Miller is a young American from New York traveling Europe with her mother and younger brother. The stereotypical brash American with money, she is both a flat character and, at the same time, a deeply complex one. The character is flat because, on the surface, she is seldom anything more than a flirt who wants to draw attention to her self; and complex because she constantly disregards the assumptions people make

about what kind of person she is and refuses to obey those rules of society that she finds inconvenient - particularly in her relations with men.

At the beginning of the novel, Daisy attracts the attention of the expatriate Winterbourne, who falls for her beauty and her coquettish behavior. For the rest of the story she refuses be labeled, sometimes appearing innocent and other times, such as when she goes to the Colosseum late at night with the shady Mr. Giovanelli, seeming to have committed indiscretions. She inspires gossip, loses social connections and ultimately exposes herself to a fatal case of malaria, all because she wants to make her own rules for her life. In the end, it is revealed that she has not done anything truly indiscreet, throwing a light of complexity on her behavior up to that point.

Mrs. Miller

Daisy's mother is a nervous matron traveling alone with her two children, with only the help of their courier Eugenio to keep them out of trouble. She defers to Eugenio's masculine authority and seems to let him do most of the caretaking, particularly of the spirited Randolph; she even permits Eugenio to discipline the children to a certain degree. In fact, she seems happily disengaged from her children's personal lives and even encourages her daughter's rampant fraternization with men.

Mrs. Miller is one of the characters in this novel who represents the "nouveau riche" - that class of wealthy Americans whose fortunes are newly acquired and who exhibit a certain coarseness that sets them apart from the other wealthy people.

Randolph Miller

Daisy's nine-year-old brother is assertive, headstrong, and in many ways a "typical" American child rampaging across Europe but not appreciating it. His passions include sweets, ships, and proclaiming the superiority of all things American.

Mrs. Costello

Winterbourne's aunt is also a wealthy American. Like Winterbourne, she has spent enough time in Europe to identify with its customs and social conventions. An elderly woman, she is frequently ill but never so much that she cannot comment on the latest social gossip. She is particularly opposed to the behavior of Daisy Miller, whose flirtatiousness and lack of respect for the rules of society offend her conventional morals. She repeatedly warns Winterbourne to avoid Daisy and the rest of her family, whom she regards as coarse and uncultivated in spite of their wealth.

Mrs. Costello is responsible for providing Winterbourne with much of the information he receives about Daisy, playing an important role in the false picture that society draws of her. Mrs. Costello represents that part of society that makes the rules and ostracizes those who don't play by them.

Mrs. Walker

Another wealthy expatriate American, Mrs. Walker resides in Rome and is friends with both the Miller family and Winterbourne. Months after meeting Daisy in Vevey, Winterbourne runs into her again at Mrs. Walker's house. Mrs. Walker is another "voice of reason" for Winterbourne. Like Mrs. Costello, she warns Winterbourne that Daisy is wayward, though she does attempt to save Daisy from a ruined reputation. Daisy refuses to listen to Mrs. Walker's advice, and in the end, Mrs. Walker writes Daisy off as unfit for society.

Mr. Giovanelli

Mr. Giovanelli is a handsome, shady Italian who befriends Daisy in Rome. Daisy is with him so often that rumors quickly circulate about improper relations and even a possible engagement. Winterbourne unsuccessfully tries to get Daisy to break of her friendship with Giovanelli, but she refuses. Giovanelli indirectly causes Winterbourne to finally write Daisy off as not a "nice girl" when Winterbourne finds them together at the Colosseum late at night. He also clears up the mystery about Daisy's virtue after her death, telling Winterbourne that she was innocent of all accusations.

Eugenio

Eugenio accompanies the Millers on their European travel and acts as a kind of surrogate father, since Mr. Miller is back in Schenectady minding the business. He exerts a significant degree of discipline with the children, being the one who gets Randolph to go to bed when Mrs. Miller cannot and warning Daisy about going off alone with men.

Objects/Places

Vevey

Winterbourne meets Daisy Miller in Vevey while he is visiting his aunt and Daisy is touring Europe with her family. It described as being more lax in terms of the freedom young, unmarried men and women have to consort with each other in public.

Chillon Castle

On the day of their first meeting, Daisy asks Winterbourne to take her to Chillon Castle, a local tourist site in Vevey. The prospect of going together starts a heated debate about whether such an outing is proper, but Daisy is determined to go. When they finally visit the castle, Daisy is more interested in teasing Winterbourne than exploring the castle.

Steamer

Winterbourne and Daisy take a steamer to Chillon Castle. Daisy's request for the steamer over other modes of transportation indicates her desire to choose the most extravagant of the options available to her.

Geneva

Winterbourne has lived in Geneva for a number of years, having gone there to school as a boy.

Rome

The second half of the novel takes place in Rome. It is there that the stakes rise for the characters, as Daisy meets the shady Mr. Giovanelli thereby stoking Winterbourne's jealousy. It is the scene of her death as well, as she contracts malaria and dies there.

Schenectady, New York

The Millers' home is in Schenectady, where Mr. Miller has made a fortune in business. The Millers describe it as a vibrant social scene and far superior to anything they have seen in Europe.

Pincian Gardens

Daisy goes to the Pincian Gardens, a very public place in Rome, to walk alone with Mr. Giovanelli. Winterbourne follows in an attempt to get rid of Giovanelli, but fails. It is here that Mrs. Walker tries to convince Daisy of the danger of walking alone with men, but Daisy again refuses to be swayed.

Parasol

Daisy frequently carries a parasol with her. While they are in the Pincian Gardens, Mr. Giovanelli takes her parasol and holds it in front of them to shield them from the public view.

Mrs. Walker's Carriage

Mrs. Walker goes after Daisy to the Pincian Gardens and attempts to get her into the carriage so that her reputation will not be ruined by walking alone with Winterbourne and Giovanelli. She succeeds only in getting Winterbourne into the carriage, where she explains just how extreme Daisy's behavior has been.

Colosseum

While walking at midnight in Rome, Winterbourne discovers Daisy and Giovanelli alone at the Colosseum. It is here that he finally writes her off as not a "nice girl" and decides to go back to his life in Geneva. It is also here that Daisy attracts a fatal case of malaria.

Social Concerns And Themes

D aisy Miller, which first appeared in England in Cornhill Magazine in 1878, has always remained one of Henry James's most popular works. It has some characteristics of the novel of manners, a genre, often but not always satiric, which represents the behavior, customs and values typical of a particular social class in a given time and place. Specifically, in it James presents an early version of his "international theme" by juxtaposing the manners and culture of American tourists in Europe with those of Americans who have lived abroad for such a long time that they have become Europeanized. The major aspects of this America-Europe contrast are innocence vs. experience, spontaneity vs. ritual, naturalness vs. artificiality and frankness vs. duplicity. In developing these polarities, James moves beyond the surface to endow his story with deepening social, psychological, and moral significance.

The social dimension arises from the differences between Daisy Miller, a young woman from Schenectady, New York, who is touring Europe with her mother and younger brother Randolph, and Frederick Winterbourne, a twenty-seven-year-old native of the United States who has spent most of his life in Geneva, Switzerland. Daisy and Winterbourne meet one June morning in the garden of a hotel in Vevey, a charming resort town on Lake Geneva. He is immediately attracted by her prettiness and her air of directness and independence so different from the restrained demeanor of European girls. With an audacity unusual for him, he tries to engage her in conversation even though they have not been properly introduced and he is pleasantly surprised when she finally begins to chat with him. They go on an excursion to the Castle of Chillon and display the stirrings of a reciprocal romantic interest. Some months later, in Rome, Winterbourne desires to resume their acquaintance but discovers that her unconventional behavior has made her a subject of gossip.

From the start, Daisy is compared to her European counterparts. She has been indulged materially and encouraged to develop an independent spirit but she lacks parental supervision.

Her father has remained in Schenectady to take care of the family business and her excessively permissive mother fails to protect her sufficiently. The girls in Geneva and Rome, instead, are always shielded by anxious parents.

Related to the question of chaperoning is the issue of flirting which for Europeans was a sign of impropriety in young women while in America it was considered a natural part of healthy courtship. Daisy herself points to this cultural difference when she says she thinks it more proper for young unmarried girls to flirt than for older married women to do so.

Through Daisy, the narrative also critiques how Victorian society limited women's intellectual growth and personal freedom. Not having received a good education, Daisy knows very little about the places she visits and admits she would not be able to act as a tutor for her brother who, unlike herself, is destined for college. As for free exploration

of the world, Winterbourne can speak to strangers, go walking wherever and with whomever he wishes and openly express his ideas, but when performed by Daisy such actions appear scandalous and authorize others to speculate about her morality.

Whereas Daisy is too impulsive, the expatriate Americans with whom she unsuccessfully attempts to associate have become so inflexible about social behavior that they seem to have forgotten the existence of human feelings. In their eyes, the Millers transgress essential codes of behavior in their overly familiar relationship with servants, in their failure to discipline little Randolph, and in the liberty accorded Daisy. The key issue in their negative judgment, however, regards the question of Daisy's "innocence," a word they use in several senses: to signify being unsophisticated in terms of social mores; to distinguish behaving naturally from playing a role; to refer to a young woman's sexual intactness. Daisy never fully understands why these people react to her so strongly or why conduct which is acceptable at home is misunderstood and disapproved of in Europe. In particular, she sees nothing wrong in openly enjoying the company of her gentlemen friends while for them her major failing is precisely her free manner with men which they insistently misinterpret as a sign of her impropriety.

Developing parallel to the social dimension of James's tale, there is a psychological theme that concerns how individuals respond to the constrictions of conventions. The characters who occupy a position at the top of the social pyramid, rigidly adhere to the prevailing modes of conduct and expect others to do likewise.

Winterbourne's aunt, Mrs. Costello, is so sure about Daisy's vulgarity that she refuses even to be introduced to her, while the ironically-named Mrs. Walker severely advises Daisy that to walk unchaperoned at twilight will ruin her reputation and becomes angry when the girl refuses to change her plans accordingly. It is on the basis of such opinions, and not for any specific wrongdoings, that Daisy is ultimately ostracized by the entire community of upper-class American expatriates in Rome.

Since we are never given access to Daisy's thoughts, we cannot know whether she ignores the existence of rigid codes regulating the behavior of young unmarried women or is determined to flaunt them. Whatever her motivation, she succeeds in proclaiming her independence. Besides continuing to frequent Giovanelli, a handsome young Italian whom everyone believes is a fortune-hunter, she allows herself to be seen with him in relatively secluded places, walks with him unchaperoned and finally accompanies hint to the Colosseum at night.

However, after she is "cut" by Winterbourne at the Colosseum she seems to lose heart, perhaps realizing she cannot continue to exercise her individuality and still claim a portion of social approval.

Winterbourne is not as free as Daisy nor as rigid as some of the other characters. He at first seems capable of seeing that Daisy offers him a vision of a new way of life and whenever he is in her presence, he is tempted to test the limits of his habitual behavior, if only to enjoy the pleasure of flirting with her. Yet, after each encounter, he feels perplexed about the true meaning of her behavior and remains under the influence of

the opinions of his aunt and Mrs. Walker. Thus, he finally cannot overcome his tendency to condemn people who disregard social decorum.

A third thematic dimension centers on the moral issue of judging people according to pre-established categories. Winterbourne is a prime example of this tendency since throughout the story he searches for the right formula to describe Daisy and to clarify for himself how to conduct his relations with her. He alternately sees her as "a pretty American flirt," "an unscrupulous young person," and "an inscrutable combination of audacity and innocence." Frustratingly for him, she constantly eludes such labeling by actions he is unable to predict. His vacillation continues until the evening he sees her with Giovanelli at the Colosseum when, with a sense of relief, he decides "she was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect." At the end, Winterbourne senses he judged Daisy unfairly because he was too inflexible, but this insight does not lead him to change his values and he returns to Geneva without having become a new man.

No explicit judgment is passed but, implicitly, he is depicted as a failure.

His relationship with Daisy was something of a moral test involving his ability to overcome his adherence to categorical thought and to relate to people as individuals rather than as types, as well as to begin seeing life anew from outside the boundaries of narrow conventions.

Techniques

Daisy Miller is a novella, a fictional form which combines the single focus of a short story with the more leisurely development of various themes typical of a novel. James, who preferred the French term nouvelle, liked the form because its "main merit and sign is the effort to do the complicated thing with a strong brevity and lucidity — to arrive on behalf of the multiplicity at a certain science of control." To achieve the double effect of intensity and expansion that is its defining characteristic, a novella usually has a small cast of characters, a rather circumscribed physical and temporal setting and a limited set of associated themes and motifs which are developed in a highly suggestive manner. This description perfectly suits Daisy Miller where the narrative focus is always on Daisy's behavior and how it is interpreted by others, a reiterated process of action and reaction that constantly acquires new and more profound significance.

Daisy Miller has four chapters, two of which are set in Vevey in June and two in Rome during the following winter and spring. Each chapter is structured in a series of scenes which become shorter and more numerous as the story progresses so that both the pace and the tension increase. In keeping with a technique characteristic of the novella as a form, James makes use of parallel scenes to develop the relationship between Daisy and Winterbourne and to accentuate the contrast between Daisy and her social world.

For example, Daisy goes on an excursion with Winterbourne and on another with Giovanelli; she is snubbed by Mrs. Costello and then by Mrs. Walker; Winterbourne sees her with Giovanelli several times and discusses her repeatedly with his aunt and with Mrs. Walker. The crucial repetitions, however, regard the scenes linking Daisy with gardens and other outdoor locales.

Symbolically, these scenes trace the cycle of her life. She meets Winterbourne in a garden in Vevey in the morning; she goes walking with him and Giovanelli one afternoon in the Pincian Gardens; she teases him about his Italian rival on the Palatine Hill at sunset; and Winterbourne surprises her with Giovanelli during a moonlight visit to the Colosseum.

In contrast to Daisy, whose thoughts and inner feelings are never revealed, Winterbourne is the "central consciousness" of the story. In fact, although the story is told by an authorial narrator in the third person, it is through Winterbourne's eyes and mind that the settings and the other characters are represented and it is he who reflects on the significance of the events. By adopting this point of view, James effectively shifted the narrative focus from the character at the center of the action (Daisy) to the character who observes the active figure (Winterbourne) and whose insights, vacillations and inadequacies form an equally important part of the reader's experience of the story. While Winterbourne watches and interprets Daisy, the reader observes and evaluates him so that the overall dramatic tension of the story resides as much in his thoughts and responses as in her actions.

The major settings — Lake Geneva, Vevey and the Castle of Chillon in Switzerland, and the city of Rome, especially the Pincian Gardens, the Palatine Hill and the Colosseum — are all places associated with leisure and beautiful scenery, and sometimes with antiquity, to which people go when they are on holiday from ordinary reality. The magical atmosphere of Vevey during the month of June provides an appropriate background for Winterbourne's encounter with Daisy.

Their excursion to the Castle of Chillon, a place celebrated by Lord Byron in a poem about a Swiss freedom-fighter, adds a further romantic touch even as it reinforces the element of independence associated with Daisy. The Roman settings would have been familiar to James's readers as primary tourist attractions. The Pincian Gardens and the Palatine Hill offer magnificent vistas of the city and, frequently crowded with Italian and foreign promenaders, are places where it seems perfectly natural for Daisy to be admired and criticized. The Colosseum is a setting with multiple symbolic associations. Byron wrote of its romantic suggestiveness in "Manfred" which springs to Winterbourne's mind when he sees it on a moonlit evening. Also a place of human sacrifice of the gladiators and the Christian martyrs, it is an extreme reminder of the power of society to punish those who deviate from established norms. Another ominous aspect is the fact that at the time of the story and for many years afterwards, until the clearing of the Roman marshes, it was feared as a source of malaria, the then-mysterious illness known as Roman fever. James implicitly draws a parallel between the "unhealthy air" of the Colosseum and the corrupted atmosphere of the expatriate American circle in Rome in which a delicate flower like Daisy cannot easily survive.

The overall style of the work sparkles in the best tradition of the novel of manners. The language is distinguished by the humorous contrast between the Millers' colloquial American idiom and the more formal speech of the American expatriates. For instance, Randolph complains that Daisy is "always blowing at me" while she remarks that he "don't care much about old castles" and that she feared life in Rome would be "awfully poky." Winterbourne's more educated idiom denotes not only his higher level of culture but also the "stiffness" of his personality which is why Daisy likes to mimic it. In keeping with their snobbery, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker use a refined and elaborate language which they like to sprinkle with foreign phrases. These voices intermingle with that of the authorial narrator which is consistently urbane, witty, and ironic. Moreover, the narrative is enriched with imagery and symbolism. Daisy's white dresses with their elaborate ruffles and wide skirts seem to announce her innocence; her ever-present parasol and her huge fan evoke her association with the sun; the gardens where she walks and proclaims her freedom point toward her wholesomeness; the interiors in which the expatriates pronounce their condemnation of her reflect their narrowness.

Themes

Appearance vs. Reality

Daisy Miller is, in large part, concerned with revealing, concealing and misdirecting - making true knowledge of a given thing or person elusive. On one level, the story is about a man's search to uncover the true identity of a woman he desires. Winterbourne is attracted to Daisy, but it is not clear to him or the reader, whether she is a proper companion for him. Her family's origins are unknown, and they behave like people who only recently gained entry into society. For example, Daisy seems to think Europe quaint compared to Schenectady. They certainly do not play by the long-established rules of society. Mrs. Costello, a wealthy American who identifies more with European ways, than American, declares the family unacceptable; however, Mrs. Walker, with whom Winterbourne is friends, initially accepts them. The question then arises: *Are* the Millers socially admissible?

On another level, the novel is about a deeper level of identity and the ways in which people rush to assumptions about each other. Daisy appears to be a girl of loose morals because she walks alone with men and brags about her wealth of "gentlemen's society," but no one has any evidence that she has done anything more indiscreet than this. Winterbourne judges her as "not a nice girl" because she is out at night with a man, but his evidence is superficial. He makes his decision about her character based on gossip and a few examples of observed behavior rather than truly getting to know her.

Of course, Daisy does nothing to aid his decision. She revels in the ambiguity her behavior creates, even seeming to prefer to have no label at all for most of the novel. In the scene when Winterbourne brings up her engagement, she teases him about the subject, first telling him she is engaged and then telling him that she isn't. Daisy resists being classified, perhaps because the price of wearing a label is being made to play society's games for the rest of her life.

Winterbourne, too, defies easy classification. In the beginning, he gives the appearance of an expatriate American who has conformed to European ways and who accepts the rules society has set for him. He never does anything overtly inappropriate with Daisy, but the only time he expresses concern for her reputation is when Mrs. Walker forces him to. Rather, he is just as happy to walk alone with Daisy as Mr. Giovanelli is, and his language suggests his lust for her. In the end, he reveals himself to be just as judgmental and superficial as those who gossip about Daisy. Only after her death, when Mr. Giovanelli reveals both that Daisy was innocent and that he himself had hoped to marry her, does Winterbourne find out who Daisy really was.

Society's Rules and Conventions

In this novel, the set of rules and conventions laid down by society underscore all the action, and the characters have no choice but to respond to them. Because it has been preordained that young women of good breeding behave a certain way, any deviation earns one a bad reputation. Daisy Miller comes from a wealthy family, but she insists on doing what she knows will earn her disapproval - walking unescorted with unmarried men and befriending shady locals. For people like Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Costello, this breach of conduct has an element of immorality to it, even though, to their knowledge, the unescorted walking leads nowhere.

Daisy rejects this convention, knowing that doing so will cause her to be rejected by society - the society that she claims to enjoy so much. This gives her character a level of complexity that is not apparent at first glance. Early in the novel, she seems to be only a wild, coarse child of the nouveau riche; but at the end of the novel, her behavior can be viewed as a comment on the behavioral conventions of society. One is left to wonder which is worse: to be seen walking alone with a man or to slander someone's reputation and cast her out of the social circle based on circumstantial evidence.

American vs. European

Since the Millers are depicted as stereotypical brash Americans traipsing across Europe, this novel is colored by a divide between the American and the European. Winterbourne, along with his aunt, Mrs. Costello, and his friend, Mrs. Walker, is an American living happily in Europe and partaking of European society. These people are clearly the "old money" that has left to return to its true roots on the continent and who identify more with Europeans than Americans. The Millers, however, are proud Americans and are set starkly apart from their expatriate peers. Nine-year-old Randolph Miller is largely bored with Europe and obnoxiously declares Schnectady, New York to be a better place. Daisy and Mrs. Miller often sound uneducated, and Daisy speaks loudly about her wardrobe and her wealth of gentleman friends. This earns them the reputation of being low class, in spite of their wealth, and subjects them to close scrutiny and gossip because they do not conform.

The Millers are clearly the "American upstarts" who do not fit in with the other characters' deep-rooted European values of propriety and discretion. Interestingly, however, the only truly European character in the novel is Mr. Giovanelli, Daisy's Italian friend in Rome, and he is referred to as a shady local.

Style

Point of View

The point of view in this novel is multi-layered. On first read, the story seems to be told from Winterbourne's perspective, but in fact it appears that a third person is telling the story as though relating a story he or she has picked up secondhand. The narrator refers to himself as "I" repeatedly throughout the story and indicates that information about Winterbourne was acquired from another source: "What I should say is, simply, that when certain persons spoke of him they affirmed that the reason of his spending so much time at Geneva was that he was extremely devoted to a lady who lived there."

In this way, the narrator provides insight into Winterbourne's experiences in much the same way as a person relating gossip. The story of Winterbourne's encounters with Daisy Miller is certainly the kind to move quickly along the gossip circuit; in fact, in the story, Daisy is the inspiration for gossip in the circles in which she moved.

It is important that the narrator tells the story from Winterbourne's point of view. It is Winterbourne's emotional journey that matters and his awakening to his own superficiality that drives the story to its conclusion.

Setting

Settings in *Daisy Miller* work on multiple levels. Most obviously, the novel is set in two of the world's most fashionable cities for the wealthy, so in the broadest sense, the novel's European setting is in contrast to the setting from which the Millers have emerged - the United States, a young nation in comparison to Europe and a place of financial upstarts now descending on the Continent. From the instant the Millers appear in Vevey, they stand out, though the international resort quality of the city forgives them a certain degree of their brashness; for example, though it is frowned upon, Daisy and Winterbourne go to the castle alone together, but nothing unseemly happens as a result.

When the setting shifts to Rome in the second half of the novel, the Millers go from being annoying American tourists to truly being unable to function in European society. Daisy's fondness for walking alone with men deemed inappropriate, and she is ostracized. Finally, it is at the Colosseum - a famous Roman setting in which the innocent Christians met their demise - that Winterbourne finally writes Daisy off as "not a nice girl," though, ironically, she has done nothing morally wrong.

The fact that Daisy dies in Rome is significant, since it is there that society gives up on saving her. Her final message to Winterbourne, then, reads as a kind of "message from the grave," since she dies in a place where no one put forth effort to understand her - not even Winterbourne, who was supposed to have cared for her.

Language and Meaning

Language in this novel is used to separate the American characters from the "European" ones and particularly to set the Millers apart from their more refined peers. Whereas Randolph speaks with a conspicuous American lilt: "My father's in Schenectady. He's got a big business. My father's rich - you bet!" Winterbourne's speech is more refined. Likewise, Daisy and Mrs. Miller frequently speak with incorrect grammar, and Daisy addresses her mother with an unrefined familiarity that takes Winterbourne by surprise.

Language also helps develop the central theme of the novel, the tension between appearance and reality - specifically regarding Daisy's innocence. Certain words get repeated throughout the story, particularly "pretty," which is how Winterbourne frequently describes Daisy. Other words, on which the conflict hangs, include "nice" and "innocent." When Winterbourne describes Daisy as "wonderfully pretty and, in short...very nice," he paints a generalized picture of the type of attractive, well-mannered young lady that his society admires. He has arrived at this conclusion based on superficial evidence, just as he will reverse his opinion of her later in the story. In presenting her to his aunt in this way, he is assuring her that Daisy is what she is supposed to be - innocent.

Structure

Daisy Miller is a short novel in two parts - one for the Vevey action and a second for the Rome action. This organization allows the tension to "ramp up" after the first part, moving Daisy from a relatively lax resort environment to a scene that is more morally strict and intolerant of her gallivanting. As a result, the novel's structure is tied tightly to the two-city setting.

In the first half of the novel, Winterbourne and Daisy have no real choices to make; in the second half, the stakes are higher, and it is there that real movement within the characters happens. Social convention is more difficult to ignore. Daisy's choices suddenly have to do with real threats to her innocence and her life. Winterbourne's choices have to do with putting off the absurd wisdom of social customs and judging Daisy with his heart.

This novel is structured so that Winterbourne, as the point of view character, must go on a kind of journey both physical and emotional to determine whether Daisy is innocent or not. In Rome, he discovers that she was in fact innocent, but it is then too late to repair their destroyed relationship.

Quotes

"The only thing I don't like...is the society. There isn't any society...I'm very fond of society, and I've always had a great deal of it." Part 1, p. 101

"I have always had...a great deal of gentlemen's society." Part 1, p. 102

"They are very common...They are the sort of Americans that one does one's duty by not - not accepting." Part 1, p. 106

"She is completely uncultivated...But she is wonderfully pretty, and, in short, she is very nice. To prove that I believe it, I'm going to take her to the Chateau de Chillon." Part 1, p. 107

"I will row you over to Chillon in the starlight." Part 1, p. 114

"That's all I want - a little fuss!" Part 1, p. 116

"I don't want you to come for your aunt...I want you to come for me." Part 1, p. 120

"Why, you were awfully mean at Vevey...You wouldn't do anything...You wouldn't stay there when I asked you." Part 2, p. 124

"I think you have made a mistake...You should sometimes listen to a gentleman - the right one." Part 2, p. 129

"I do nothing but listen to gentlemen!" Part 2, p. 129

"You are old enough to be more reasonable. You are old enough, dear Miss Miller, to be talked about." Part 2, p. 131

"If this is improper, Mrs. Walker...then I am all improper, and you must give me up." Part 2, p. 132

"I'm a fearful, frightful flirt! Did you ever hear of a nice girl that was not?" Part 2, p. 137

"Oh, it seems as if they couldn't live without each other! Well, [Mr. Giovanelli]'s a real gentleman, anyhow. I keep telling Daisy she's engaged!" Part 2, p. 143

"She was the most beautiful young lady I ever saw, and the most amiable...and she was the most innocent." Part 2, p. 151

"I was booked to make a mistake. I have lived to long in foreign parts." Part 2, p. 152

Adaptations

A cinematic adaptation of Daisy Miller was directed and produced for Paramount Pictures by Peter Bogdanovich in 1974. The film is visually very pleasing, has some memorable scenes such as Winterbourne's first encounter with Daisy in the hotel garden in Vevey and the party in Mrs. Walker's apartment in Rome, and is enlivened by fine performances by the supporting actresses Eileen Brennan as Mrs. Walker, Mildred Natwick as Mrs. Costello, and Cloris Leachman as Mrs. Miller. The overall result, however, is disappointing. The screenplay by Frederic Raphael remains very faithfu l to the original tale in terms of plot and dialogue but pushes the failed love story to the foreground and preserves little of James's social and psychological nuance. In addition, while Barry Brown convincingly conveys Winterbourne's divided attitude toward Daisy, Cybill Shepherd is miscast, or poorly directed, in the title role.

Key Questions

Daisy Miller centers partly on the role of convention in the human community and on the problem of reconciling the right to express one's individuality with the need to live together in harmony. This perennial dilemma has no easy solution and discussion of it will soon go beyond the question of whether Daisy is a flirt or behaves improperly. Another significant issue is the temptation to reduce people to intellectual concepts. Using James's development of this theme as a starting point, groups can consider how flexibly used generalizations facilitate communication while pigeon-holing people in ready-made categories denies their humanity. Also of interest in this sense are Winterbourne's "masculine" categories for labeling women. Finally, the story invites reflection on relations between parents and children.

1. Randolph Miller hails Daisy's first appearance with the announcement "She's an American girl!" What characteristics does James attribute to this figure?

2. Winterbourne is dismayed by his impression that Daisy's traits never quite "fall into an ensemble." Does she necessarily have to be either wholly admirable or deplorable according to his set of values?

3. Daisy's inner thoughts are never revealed. Is it possible to speculate about her values on the basis of her actions and speech?

4. Is Daisy an innocent victim of insensitive and narrow antagonists or is she largely responsible for her ostracization?

5. Note situations where one character evaluates another. What is the role of conventions and stereotyping in those evaluations? What does this aspect of the story suggest about human relations in the real world?

6. What role models do the various women characters provide for Daisy?

7. To what degree are the Millers judged harshly because their wealth has been recently acquired?

8. To what extent are peculiarities of speech an element of characterization in this story?

9. In his Preface, James implicitly played down the sociological significance of Daisy when he said she was "pure poetry." How important is imagery and symbolism in his depiction of her?

10. How are America and Europe contrasted in the story? Why was the contrast between America and the Old World of interest to writers and readers in the nineteenth century?

Topics for Discussion

Whose story is *Daisy Miller?*

What role does Mrs. Costello play in the novel?

How does Daisy's illness function in the story?

What role does gossip play in *Daisy Miller* in terms of the characters' attempts to uncover the truth?

Interpret the ending of the novel. Does Daisy bring about her own demise?

What has Winterbourne learned from his experience with Daisy?

How do certain biographical elements of Henry James' life influence the theme of American vs. European?

Research the American *nouveau riche* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How did they alter perceptions of the wealthy American traveling abroad, and what role does this play in *Daisy Miller?*

Literary Precedents

As a novel of manners, Daisy Miller fits into the tradition of fiction that presents the prevailing modes of conduct peculiar to a specific time and place and examines how they control the characters' perceptions and behavior. This tradition reached its earliest perfection in Pride and Prejudice (1813) by Jane Austen, whom James admired intensely, and is best represented in America by Edith Wharton in The Age of Innocence (1920). James's interest in the "international theme" was partly stimulated by Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Marble Faun (1860) which focuses on American artists in Rome and deals with the differences between American and European manners and culture as well as with the themes of innocence vs. experience and naturalness vs.

artificiality.

Daisy is a classic portrayal of the American girl as spontaneous, selfreliant, natural and generous in spirit.

Her literary sisters include Jo March of Louisa May Alcott's Little Women (1868) and Penelope Lapham of William Dean Howells's The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885) as well as several of James's later heroines. For her independent character, her refreshing directness and her innocence, Daisy can also be related to the male protagonists of various American novels centering on adolescents encountering the limitations, corruption or violence of the adult world. Chief among these are Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885), Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage (1895), and J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye (1951).

Related Titles

James found the figure of "the American Girl" congenial to many of his important themes and refined and extended his depiction of her in Isabel Archer in The Portrait of a Lady (1881), Milly Theale in The Wings of the Dove (1902), and Maggie Verver in The Golden Bowl (1904). The international theme developed in these works also figures prominently in Roderick Hudson (1875) which is about a young sculptor who visits Rome and risks wasting his talent, in The American (1877) which tells the story of a wealthy American businessman who goes to Paris in search of culture and falls in love with an aristocratic woman whose family thwarts their romance and in The Europeans (1878) where the situation is reversed and two Americans born and raised in Europe return to their New England relatives.

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