

The Golden Bowl Study Guide

The Golden Bowl by Henry James

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Plot Summary

Henry James' novel "The Golden Bowl" tells the story of the marriage of two couples and the impact the prior relationships of these couples have on each other. The story revolves around a beautiful, but cracked, golden bowl and the secrets this bowl allows to surface. Maggie, the heroine of the book, goes into full battle mode to keep her husband, but protect others from her knowledge of an adulterous affair. As the novel ends, all Maggie's husband can see is her, proving to Maggie that her battle and the sacrifices that were made were worth her efforts.

The action of the novel begins just a few days before the wedding of Maggie Verver, daughter of a wealthy collector, and Prince Amerigo, the ancestor of defamed royalty. During a visit to Fanny Assisnham, the woman who introduced Maggie to the Prince, the Prince learns that Charlotte Stant, a former lover is back in town. As Charlotte was also a friend of Maggie's, Charlotte asks the Prince to accompany her on a shopping trip for a wedding gift. The two find themselves in a shop where a beautiful golden bowl is for sale. Although they do not buy the bowl because they suspect it is flawed, the couple makes a great impression on the shopkeeper. This shopkeeper eavesdrops as the two speak in Italian about their desire to give gifts to one another.

After Maggie is married, she is unhappy with her father being alone, so she arranges for him to meet Charlotte. The two decide to get married, as Maggie had hoped. After this marriage, however, Maggie begins to spend increasing amounts of time at her father's home with her father while Charlotte and the Prince are left attending social functions together. As they find themselves spending more and more time away from their spouses, Charlotte and the Prince restart their old relationship. As time goes by, Maggie begins to suspect there is an affair going on between Charlotte and the Prince.

Maggie receives the proof she needs of this affair when she buys the golden bowl as a birthday gift for her father. The shopkeeper who sells the bowl later comes to Maggie's house to tell her there is a flaw in the piece and to offer her a refund. As he talks to her, he recognizes the pictures of the Prince and Charlotte that Maggie has on display. He tells Maggie of the couple's behavior the day they were in his store considering the purchase of the same bowl.

After the Prince recognizes the bowl that is now in Maggie's possession and realizes she knows about their relationships, both past and present, he does nothing but wait to see what will happen. Maggie, on the same terms, waits also. In the conclusion of the novel, Maggie's father, it is believed, is still unaware of the affair between his wife and son-in-law while Charlotte is unaware that her step-daughter has discovered the adulterous affair. At Mr. Verver's suggestion, however, he and Charlotte decide to go back to the Verver's hometown in America. At the end of the novel all the Prince can see is Maggie.



Volume One, Book First, Chapter 1

Volume One, Book First, Chapter 1 Summary

Henry James' novel "The Golden Bowl" tells the story of the marriage of two couples and the impact the prior relationships of these couples have on each other. The story revolves around a beautiful, but cracked, golden bowl and the secrets this bowl allows to surface. Maggie, the heroine of the book, goes into full battle mode to keep her husband, but protect others from her knowledge of an adulterous affair. As the novel ends, all Maggie's husband can see is her, proving to Maggie that her battle and the sacrifices that were made were worth her efforts.

This introductory chapter opens with the Prince visiting some of his favorite places in London while contemplating his upcoming marriage. The idea of language is discussed between Maggie and the Prince. While Maggie is ashamed of how good the Prince's English is compared to her handling of the language, especially since it is her native language. The Prince insinuates there are qualities to be admired more than speech. These qualities include the goodness of Maggie and her father. Maggie argues that her father would have liked the Prince regardless of what language he spoke.

The Prince also indicates to Maggie that there are two sides of him. One of these sides is comprised of his family its history. While Maggie and her father know much about this history, the Prince feels they do not know him well as an individual person. Maggie admits she has learned much about her future husband from the books she has read about his family. She seems to indicate that it is this history that made her care for the Prince. When she questions where he would have been without this history, the Prince states that he would perhaps have been in a position where he had more money.

In the course of this chapter Maggie and the Prince also discuss the romantic outlook Americans have of life and the world around them. Maggie makes the comment that her father's outlook on life is the most romantic of any with which she has ever come in contact. Her father is hoping to leave his native city a museum, or a collection of items, put together by his own hands. Maggie tells the Prince that he is one of the rarest and most valuable additions to this collection.

Meanwhile, the Prince searches his own conscience and his reasons for marrying Maggie. While he believes himself not to be deceitful or a hypocrite, he admits to himself that he wishes to use this opportunity, and Maggie's father's money, to make a new name and a new history for himself. As he continues to contemplate the changes his new union will bring about, the Prince decides to go visit his old friend Fanny Assingham.

It is Fanny who introduced the Prince to Maggie and who is the one to whom the Prince credits his upcoming marriage. As he rides in the carriage, the Prince contemplates his worth in terms of monetary value. He also muses on the idea that his life seems to be



separated by a curtain that divides the known from the unknown. While he is unsure what surprises may be in store for him once this curtain is drawn, he feels he is sure of his relationship with Fanny. He has faith she will steer him in the right direction since she has so far.

Volume One, Book First, Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter one introduces the reader to some very important background for this novel. For instance, the Prince, a native of London is preparing to marry Maggie Verver, the daughter of an American collector. The marriage appears to be a career move on the part of both parties. Maggie sees the Prince as a valuable part of her father's collection. His most important and most interesting aspects to her are his history and his lineage. The Prince, on the other hand, believes his marriage to Maggie will increase his monetary value. He at last sees himself in the company of people with money. The prince does not share Maggie's high opinion of his background and his family's history. He believes his background is full of infamy and that his marriage to Maggie will be a step up in the world. Note that both the Prince and Maggie see the marriage in terms of its ability to benefit them in a monetary way. Although the Prince admits he liked Maggie from the first time he met her, there is really no importance placed on love in the relationship.

In addition to giving the groundwork for the book, this chapter also introduces some of the main themes of the book. The idea of marriage and the utilization of this relationship is the central theme of the book. The idea of innocence versus worldliness also comes into play as Maggie transforms from the innocent creature that she appears to be in this first chapter. While the Prince is more worldly in his ways and appears to have a better grasp of the way things really are, it is perhaps hinted by his claim to Maggie that he is neither deceitful or a hypocrite that he is indeed both of these things.

Important things to note in this chapter include James' description of the Prince's marriage as an entrapment. James portrays this event as if the Prince is being locked up with no hope of release. Goodness, particularly the goodness of Maggie and her father are also described as characteristics that hedge one in. This idea of entrapment continues throughout the novel. Note also that the Prince is referred to only by his title in this first chapter. This strengthens the idea that his importance to the Ververs' is only in his status as royalty, and not as an individual person.



Volume One, Book First, Chapters 2-3

Volume One, Book First, Chapters 2-3 Summary

During his discussion with Fanny, the Prince admits the fear that his upcoming marriage brings to him. The Prince promises not to run away from the monster of his marriage as long as Fanny promises to help guide him along the way. He shares with her his fear that he will someday do something wrong without even being aware that what he is doing is wrong. He believes Fanny can steer him clear of these possible wrongs. The Prince tells Fanny he believes her moral sense is much stronger than his own.

Throughout their talk, the Prince feels as if Fanny is ill at ease about something. He finally questions her about this feeling and Fanny tells him that his old friend Charlotte Stant is in town. Like Fanny, the Prince is also adversely affected by the knowledge that Charlotte is in town just before his wedding. The two agree they had not expected Charlotte, but that Maggie will be happy to see her. Fanny tells the Prince that Charlotte will be staying with her and should be arriving back at the house soon. As they wait for her arrival the Prince and Fanny discuss Charlotte's reasons for coming for the wedding.

In Chapter 3 the Prince goes so far as to suggest that after he and Maggie are married that Charlotte should come and live with them. It is soon after this comment is made that Charlotte enters the room. As the Prince sees her again, he remembers all of the things he once knew so well about her. Although the Prince feels as if he should leave the two women alone, he intentionally stays in hopes of discovering how long Charlotte will be staying. As the Prince and Charlotte speak to each other for the first time, the Prince determines that Charlotte has come with the intention of seeing Maggie, her old school friend, happy. The Prince knows Maggie has been writing to Charlotte and keeping her up to date on her wedding preparations. Maggie does not know, however, how well the Prince and Charlotte know each other.

When Fanny returns to the room, Charlotte and the Prince are discussing Charlotte's options of marrying or staying single. Charlotte insists that if the two want to see her married so badly, they must arrange this union for her. The talk turns to the Prince's own wedding and Charlotte asks him to help her pick out a wedding gift for Maggie. Fanny asks if she cannot help Charlotte choose the gift, but Charlotte insists the Prince help her do the choosing.

Volume One, Book First, Chapters 2-3 Analysis

James develops his plot as he introduces Fanny Assingham and Charlotte Stant in chapters two and three. According to the text, Fanny is the one who introduced Maggie and the Prince to one another. She is in a way, the reason the two are getting married. In light of this role, the Prince decides to visit Fanny in an attempt to persuade the



woman to agree to continue to watch over him. He believes that with her help, he will not do anything that will bring harm to himself or his marriage. Note that James describes this relationship in sailing terminology. Although the Prince notes he does not need to be in the same boat as Fanny, he wants to keep her within sight so that he can take cues from her.

In Chapter three Charlotte Stant is introduced. Although it is not known to Maggie, it is obvious that the Prince and Charlotte shared a deep and intimate relationship in the past. Judging from the Prince's reaction to the news that Charlotte is in town, it appears that these two may still have feelings for each other. The Prince, however, takes his cues from Charlotte and believes she has come simply to see her friend's happiness. At the conclusion of chapter three, however, Charlotte asks the Prince to help her choose a wedding gift for Maggie. Although this request may be purely innocent, it also gives the two a chance to be alone together.



Volume One, Book First, Chapters 4-6

Volume One, Book First, Chapters 4-6 Summary

In Chapter four when Fanny is alone with her husband, she voices her concerns about Charlotte arriving in town just in time for the Prince's wedding. She is concerned that some might believe she is responsible for Charlotte's coming. Fanny is also concerned that Charlotte has come to see the Prince again and perhaps restart their old affair. Fanny uses her husband as a sounding board off which to bounce her ideas concerning why Charlotte might have come back when she did and what Fanny should do about the situation. Her husband, Bob, asks the depth of the relationship between the Prince and Charlotte. Fanny tells him they were in love with each other, but neither had enough money for them to marry.

Fanny goes on to tell her husband that the Prince had never heard of Maggie before Fanny introduced the two. Charlotte and the Prince had already gone their separate ways by this time. Fanny stresses to her husband that it was she who introduced the Prince and Maggie. Fanny believes Maggie does not know about the relationship between the Prince and Charlotte. She tells her husband that Maggie will be terribly hurt if she ever does find out about the relationship. Fanny ends her discussion with the belief that Charlotte is attempting to act in Maggie's best interests. She believes Charlotte has timed her return visit perfectly and intends only to help Maggie through her wedding and marriage. In return Fanny tells her husband that they must befriend Charlotte in the same way and help her to find someone to marry.

In Chapter five Charlotte and the Prince go on their shopping trip together. As they first meet Charlotte admits to the Prince that it is for this one hour alone together that she came back to London. The Prince is uncomfortable with his lack of knowledge about Charlotte's intentions, and his own feelings. Before they begin shopping, they sit together in the park and Charlotte tells the Prince that she came back to London for this one hour they might spend together as they had in the past. She tells the Prince that it is his willingness to come with her on her shopping trip that proves he is all she wanted. She concludes that even if he does not understand her reasoning, she wanted him to know this. After this discussion, the two begin their shopping. They purposefully skip all the shops Maggie may have been to as well as those that Maggie and the Prince visited together. As they shop, they discuss Maggie's positive qualities.

In Chapter six Charlotte and the Prince find themselves in an interesting shop on Bloomsbury Street. As the shopkeeper shows them various items, they both agree there is nothing there that Maggie would appreciate. As they continue to look, the Prince asks Charlotte if there is anything there that she would like. He tells her this would be a token of their time together on that day. They speak to one another in Italian, a language they believe the shopkeeper, who is still showing them items, cannot understand. Charlotte points out to the Prince that even if she did accept a token from him, she would never



be able to wear or display it. Unfortunately, however, the shopkeeper soon lets on to the couple that he speaks Italian and has understood their entire conversation.

Soon after this discovery, the shopkeeper brings out a final item, a golden bowl made of crystal. Charlotte considers the bowl, but asks why the shopkeeper offers it to her so cheaply if it is so valuable. Before the shopkeeper can answer, the Prince leaves the shop to wait outside. Although Charlotte suspects there is something wrong with the bowl, she continues to look at and consider it as a gift. She finally declines to buy the bowl, claiming it is too expensive. The shopkeeper promises to keep it for her.

Once she is outside the Prince asks her if she had finally realized what was wrong with the bowl. He claims to have seen it from the beginning. The Prince believes the crack to be a bad symbol, especially in something one hopes to give as a wedding gift. It is at this point the Prince tells Charlotte he hopes he will be able to freely give her a gift on one day. This will be the day that she marries, he says. Upon these words, they depart from one another.

Volume One, Book First, Chapters 4-6 Analysis

Note that although Fanny's husband listens intently to her discussion of the situation with the Prince, Maggie and Charlotte, he does not really understand what all of the fuss is about. Even though he does not completely understand his wife's concern about the situation, his role in the novel is solidified in Chapter four. He is the sounding board off of which his wife bounces her ideas. He is also a source of comic relief as he picks at his wife and lightly makes fun of her concern over a situation which he considers to be out of her control.

In these chapters James spends much time contemplating the reasons why Charlotte has come back to town just in time for Maggie's wedding. While Fanny chooses to believe that Charlotte only wants to support her good friend, there is the lurking possibility that she may have come to try to win the Prince back. In her conversation with her husband Fanny also brings up questions concerning the Prince's and Maggie's reasons for wanting to marry one another. It appears there may be more than affection cementing their decision to marry. The Prince, it is suspected, may only want the Ververs' money. Note that Fanny tells her husband this lack of funds is the reason that Charlotte and the Prince did not act on their love for one another. Fanny says that the two could not have been married because the Prince could not live without money.

Note also Fanny's role as adviser to the Prince. While she definitely spends an adequate amount of time considering the young peoples' situation, she closes her eyes to the suggestion that there may be anything immoral in Charlotte's actions. Since she is not actively discouraging a relationship between the two, Charlotte and the Prince find no impediments in re-igniting their old friendship.

The golden bowl is introduced in Chapter six. This bowl is significant to the book not only because Charlotte considers it as a wedding gift for Maggie but also because of



what the bowl represents. This is a beautiful crystal bowl decorated with gold. While it appears to be highly desirable, both the Prince and Charlotte suspect there is something wrong with it. This bowl represents the Prince's upcoming marriage to Maggie. Although it seems desirable, it is cracked from the beginning because of the Prince's ongoing relationship with Charlotte. Also note that while they are in the store, the couple speaks to each other in Italian believing that the shopkeeper will not be able to understand them. However, the shopkeeper soon lets them know that he also knows Italian. It is important to note the comment that Charlotte makes that the shopkeeper will be sure to remember them.

Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 1-2

Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 1-2 Summary

At the opening of the second book Adam Verver is alone at the Fawns, his summer home. There are ladies visiting in his home whom he believes are vying for his attention. He considers marriage now because his daughter, Maggie, is now married. This chapter explores the current state of the relationship between Maggie, the Prince and himself. It also gives background on Mr. Verver's first wife and the mistakes he made while married to her. He assumes that if his wife had not passed away, she would have led him farther and farther away from his studies and his collections.

In Chapter 2 it is noted that his time with his first wife perhaps brought Mr. Verver into a period better than that before his marriage. He is happy as he plans his museum and the collection of art he plans to leave the people of London. Mr. Verver is also happy with the grandson that the Prince and Maggie have given him. Mr. Verver watches his daughter and the Prince together and wonders if he and his wife were ever that happy together.

Maggie, the Prince and the remainder of their company return to the house where they find Mr. Verver is alone with Mrs. Rance. There is a flicker of recognition in the eyes of everyone who sees the two together that there is a possibility something might have happened between the two. It is this thought, and the idea of Maggie's anxiety, that makes Mr. Verver consider remarriage. He realizes he needs a wife who can do for him what Maggie had done in the past.

Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 1-2 Analysis

This pair of chapters mainly describes, in detail, the scholarly and precise nature of Maggie's father. Although he had never thought he would consider wanting to get married again, he now considers it because of his daughter. Now that she has her own husband, she is unable to do the things she had done for him before. He finds he needs someone to fill this gap and ease Maggie's anxiety.

Note in this chapter that the Prince makes an interesting comment in which he compares himself to a piece of crystal. He remarks that he is a perfect crystal, not one with cracks and flaws as these pieces can be gotten cheaply. This quote is reminiscent of the golden bowl which the shopkeeper claims to be made of one solid piece of crystal. It is suspected, however, that the bowl is flawed, a characteristic the Price claims he does not have.



Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 3-4

Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 3-4 Summary

In the afternoon, after lunch, Maggie and her father spend time together with Maggie's son. The Prince appears to be excluded from these visits. He is still insecure and unsure of his bond with both his wife and father-in-law. Meanwhile Maggie and her father want to be together at any cost. Maggie depends on Fanny to keep the Prince satisfied with her explanations of the father and daughter's close relationship. During this time, the Prince is lonely for the places he has left behind, the few pieces of property he still has left. However, the Prince realizes he must make sacrifices in order to regain control of these properties. The father and daughter finally speak of the incident between himself and Mrs. Rance. Maggie insists the woman only made sexual advances toward Mr. Verver because he was so young. While Maggie wishes she had waited till she was older to marry, for her father's sake, she cannot deny the fact there will be other women who will try to capture her father's attention.

In chapter four Maggie encourages her father to consider marriage again. She feels that by her marriage to the Prince, she has changed the status quo not only in her relationship with her father but also in his relationship with the rest of society. Maggie tells her father she believes the Prince, as well as Fanny, believes they should be less socially limited. She believes the Prince, however, has accepted the situation. As they talk, Maggie's father realizes she has something on her mind. When he questions her about it, she asks if he could stand for her to invite another woman to visit with them. Maggie proposes to her father that she should ask Charlotte to come and visit with them. Maggie describes Charlotte to him, and tells him how much she respects and admires Charlotte. In light of this information, Mr. Verver agrees to write and invite Charlotte to visit them at Fawns.

Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 3-4 Analysis

James introduces and describes Maggie's father in this section of the novel. Mr. Verver and his daughter have always had a close relationship, and this relationship only strengthens after Maggie's marriage and the birth of her first child. It is described in the text that Mr. Verver almost takes the place of the baby's father. He and Maggie spend much time alone with the child talking and sharing their feelings while the Prince is left out. Since she is concerned for her father, Maggie attempts to persuade him to get married again. She even arranges for him to meet her friend, Charlotte, whom she thinks might be a good match. It is in this section that Maggie tells her father she knows that Charlotte was in a relationship before that did not work out. Maggie believes this relationship is over, and she is not aware it was the Prince with whom Charlotte was involved.



Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 5-7

Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 5-7 Summary

Charlotte arrives at Fawns and the other female company, including Mrs. Rance, leaves. In the opening of chapter 5, Mr. Verver and Fanny visit a final time before Fanny and her husband also leave the Fawns. Fanny tells Mr. Verver it is because of Charlotte that the other women left. Fanny claims it was Charlotte's plan to disperse this female company, and that these other females saw that Charlotte was the real one intended to marry Mr. Verver.

Soon after the Assinghams leave Fawns, Maggie and the Prince leave also for a trip to Italy. It is at this point that Mr. Verver is alone with Charlotte. Maggie also leaves her son in the care of her father, Charlotte and the baby's nurse. Mr. Verver and Charlotte often meet in the nursery on their trips to see the baby, just as he and Maggie did in times past. Charlotte takes over Mr. Verver's responsibility of writing to Maggie each day. In light of this action, Mr. Verver decides to see in what other ways Charlotte can be of use to him. Charlotte plays for him his favorite songs on the piano. After an evening of music, Mr. Verver spends a restless evening pacing on the terrace before he realizes he must marry Charlotte. Charlotte not only contributes to his household, she will also loosen the stress on his relationship with Maggie.

In Chapter 6 Charlotte and Mr. Verver spend several days together in Brighton. It is during this time that Mr. Verver feels more and more strongly that asking Charlotte for her hand in marriage would be the right thing to do. Following their exploration of Mr. Gutermann-Seuss's collection, Mr. Verver asks Charlotte to marry him. Charlotte accepts the idea and admits she would like to be attached to someone. She does not like being single, she tells him. Even so, Charlotte questions Mr. Verver to be sure he is sincere about his affection for her. She even asks him how he believes Maggie will react to the knowledge that he is marrying one of her friends from school. After Mr. Verver convinces Charlotte he has thought all possibilities through, he suggests they go to Paris to tell Maggie of their news face to face. Charlotte appears uncomfortable at this suggestion and insists they wait until they have Maggie's blessing before moving forward with their plans.

In Chapter 7 Mr. Verver has written to his daughter concerning the change in his relationship with Charlotte. He, like Charlotte, now waits for Maggie's reply. Maggie's telegram states that she shares in their joy and excitement. She also notes she and the Prince will be leaving for Fawns immediately. Mr. Verver and Charlotte debate the actual meaning of the telegram. Charlotte now wonders how the Prince feels about her intended marriage to Mr. Verver. Mr. Verver finally decides Charlotte's anxiety comes from not hearing from the Prince himself. He proposes she send a telegram to the Prince. He will ask to see neither Charlotte's telegram to the Prince nor the Prince's return message. Upon the receipt of the Prince's telegram, Charlotte asks Mr. Verver



again if he does not want to read the message which she calls grave. Mr. Verver declines and Charlotte wads the note into her pocket.

Volume One, Book Second, Chapters 5-7 Analysis

Trouble looms in this section where both Maggie, who is unaware that the Prince and Charlotte have had a past relationship, and Fanny, who is aware of the past relationship, encourage Mr. Verver to consider Charlotte as a marriage companion. It is only after Mr. Verver learns how useful Charlotte will be to him and how pleasant she makes life that he decides to propose to her. Note that he still does not seem to want to get married but feels he must to make Maggie feel better.

Notice that even after he proposes to her, Charlotte procrastinates, waiting first for Maggie's response, then later for the Prince's response. After much debate and working over the impression the marriage would make on all of those who will be involved, Charlotte's final action is to send the Prince a telegram. She calls his response "grave" and offers to let Mr. Verver see it but he refuses. By agreeing to marry Mr. Verver, Charlotte puts herself in a very interesting situation where she will become the step-mother-in-law of her former lover. It is suspected this close proximity could lead to problems later on in the relationship.



Volume One, Book Third, Chapters 1-4

Volume One, Book Third, Chapters 1-4 Summary

In Chapter one Charlotte is alone at a party. Both Maggie and Mr. Verver have not come and have instead stayed at home together. Charlotte is beautifully dressed and made up, and is proud of the person she has become. The Prince meets Charlotte where she stands and she allows him to escort her. Meanwhile Colonel Assingham watches over the scene from a balcony above. Charlotte asks the Prince to stay near her because she wants Fanny, also, to see the two of them together. When Fanny does see the two of them, she begins to question Charlotte why they are there without their spouses. Charlotte infers to the gossip that Maggie would rather be with her father than with her own husband. She tells Fanny she believes Maggie actually arranged the circumstances so that she could spend some time with her father. It is at this point that Fanny asks if the Prince comes to see Charlotte during the times that Maggie is with her father. Charlotte insists that he does not, but adds that she does go to see him. When Fanny claims not to understand Charlotte's feeling of being useful to Mr. Verver in relieving Maggie's worries about her father, Charlotte assumes the woman does not wish to continue their friendship. As Charlotte turns to end their discussion, she is told she has been summoned.

As Charlotte responds to her summons in Chapter two, Fanny addresses the Prince. She tries to warn him that it is not proper for him to be seen with his Charlotte in such a manner. The Prince, however, only brushes off her concerns. He talks instead about how Mr. Verver has saved both himself and Charlotte. That the union between Mr. Verver and Charlotte was what the Prince and Fanny had hoped for for Charlotte the day they met together at Fanny's home. The Prince argues that Mr. Verver is in a way also at fault in the situation and should think of himself more as Charlotte's husband. As Fanny becomes more and more agitated at their conversation, the Prince, like Charlotte, asks Fanny if she wishes to give him up. Although Fanny finds the courage to laugh at the Prince, she admits to herself at the end of the chapter that she feels afraid of the young man for the first time in her life.

As chapter three opens Fanny wonders to herself what she has done as she rides home with her husband in her carriage. She brings up the subject of Charlotte and the Prince's relationship and she and her husband discuss the significance of this relationship as they travel to their home. When they reach their home, Bob finally makes a suggestion that Fanny leave the situation to Charlotte and the Prince. In the conclusion of the chapter, the text indicates that Fanny feels as if she has just come back from a funeral.

In Chapter four the author describes Charlotte and the Prince's outlook on the situation in which they find themselves as one of victims. They believe they have been forced by their spouses into having a relationship with one another. They see themselves as both guiltless and blameless in this matter. Although she feels that if Mr. Verver had asked to see the Prince's telegram, that would have ended their relationship, she feels no guilt

because she did offer to let him see it. One rainy day when the Prince is waiting for his wife, Charlotte comes to his house. The butler believes she has come to see Maggie, and will wait with the Prince, when indeed it is the Prince in whom she is interested.

Volume One, Book Third, Chapters 1-4 Analysis

Apparently, a considerable amount of time has passed between the second and third books. Charlotte and Mr. Verver are now married. However, Charlotte finds herself alone without her husband at a party. The Prince is also there alone. Both Maggie and Mr. Verver have avoided attending the party, as has become their habit. It is obvious there is a great distance between Charlotte and Mr. Verver as well as Maggie and the Prince. The tone of the situation, made obvious by Fanny's questions, is that Charlotte should have gone to her sick husband instead of Maggie. However, Charlotte wants to make the point the Maggie would rather be with her father than her husband and risks leaving Charlotte and the Prince together alone in order to be with her father.

Fanny feels guilty about the relationship she feels she has helped to form between Charlotte and the Prince. Charlotte and the Prince, however, do not feel at all guilty about what they are doing. They believe they are innocent victims who have been pushed to each other by spouses who would rather be with someone else.



Volume Two, Book Third, Chapters 5-8

Volume Two, Book Third, Chapters 5-8 Summary

As Charlotte visits with the Prince, they discuss their days, how they can to be where they are, and their feelings about their missing spouses. When asked what she will tell her husband about the way she spent her day, Charlotte replies that she will tell him the truth; she has been with the Prince. Charlotte tells the Prince she believes things might had been different if she and Mr. Verver had a child together, but implies that will never happen. At the conclusion of this chapter the two make a vow together to stand together in the lack of their spouses. The chapter closes with the two sharing the passion of physical affection.

In chapter six the author discusses the Prince's current feelings toward Fanny Assingham. As Fanny continues to be involved in the situation, she notices Charlotte's absence from her own home, and Maggie's continual presence there. Charlotte takes over Maggie's visiting duties while Maggie takes care of her father's home. Meanwhile Fanny keeps a watchful eye on the situation. Only once is a dinner party held at Mr. Verver's home. It is during this party that the Prince realizes how much everyone there still regards his wife as Maggie Verver, and not the Prince's husband.

A new problem is introduced to the Prince in chapter seven. As the quartet plays, Fanny arranges to talk to him alone on one of the couches. She mentions to the Prince that Maggie and Mr. Verver have decided not to go to the Matcham's party after all. It is during this discussion that the Prince notes that Fanny lies to him for the first time. However, the Prince and Charlotte do attend the Matcham party without their spouses. They had, after all, been looking for an opportunity to spend some time together away from their spouses.

In chapter eight the Prince questions Fanny as to how his and Maggie's spouses would have gotten along at the Matcham party. Although he is enjoying the party, he believes Mr. Verver and his daughter would not have enjoyed it. Meanwhile the Prince and Charlotte are snatching moments of time to spend together when they will not be noticed by the others. The only one who might give their secret away is Fanny and Charlotte insists to the Prince there is nothing Fanny can say that would hurt them without discrediting herself. Although Charlotte is supposed to travel home from the party with the Assinghams, it is arranged that she and the Prince stay at the party longer than the Assinghams. They do so they can travel together and have some private time after the party.

Volume Two, Book Third, Chapters 5-8 Analysis

In this section, the relationship between the Prince and Charlotte grows. As their spouses pay less attention to them the Prince and Charlotte become more interested in



and evenly physically active with each other. In fact, they finally arrange to attend an out of town party without their spouses. It is during this party that they are finally able to arrange to find private time with each other without the fear of their spouses finding out what they are doing.

In fact, the Assinghams, Fanny in particular, are the only people present who seem to pay much attention to the developing relationship between Charlotte and the Prince. Ever since the night of the first party where she discovered the pair alone together without their spouses, Fanny has been monitoring the situation closely even though her husband has advised her not to be involved in it. Regardless, Fanny has noted the behaviors taking place in both homes and has been present to see how the couples are interacting with each other. Apparently Fanny feels herself responsible for the outcomes of these relationships because she helped to put them together. As Charlotte notes, however, Fanny cannot say anything to Mr. Verver or Maggie about the relationship between the Prince and Charlotte without making herself out to be a fool. She encouraged the original marriages based on the positive qualities of each person's character; to try to portray them as frauds and adulterers now would make her appear a liar.



Volume One, Book Third, Chapters 9-11

Volume One, Book Third, Chapters 9-11 Summary

In chapter nine the Prince mulls the relationship between Lady Castledean and Mr. Blint, two others who have lingered at the Matchum party. When Charlotte joins him on the veranda, a comment is made about the day being like a cup they need to drain together. This comment reminds the two of the golden bowl in the Bloomsbury shop. The Prince remembers the bowl as being treacherous and cracked and hopes their day will not turn out in the same way. The two decide to not stay for lunch, but to leave right away. They decide to go to Gloucester to explore the old cathedrals there.

In chapter ten Fanny asserts to her husband that she has decided for sure there is nothing going on between Charlotte and the Prince. She feels that Charlotte is only reacting to the way Maggie takes over Charlotte's own home and husband. In fact, Fanny tells her husband her respect for Charlotte has grown instead of dwindling. Although she lets her husband know that she knows Charlotte and the Prince are staying over at the Matchams, she swears she does not ever want to know what they did while they stayed there.

In chapter eleven Fanny tells her husband that she believes Maggie is beginning to doubt her husband's fidelity for the first time. Fanny tells her husband that Maggie is taking over the situation because for the first time she realizes that she misses her husband. Fanny believes Maggie will have to wake up and take control of the situation to keep her father from finding out what has been happening all along between Charlotte and the Prince.

Volume One, Book Third, Chapters 9-11 Analysis

It is just at the point that Charlotte and the Prince are poised to be unfaithful to their spouses that Fanny at last makes her decision that neither of them are doing anything wrong. She describes to her husband a meeting she has with Maggie in which she realizes that Maggie knows what is going on between the two. Fanny believes Maggie will take the situation in hand in order to keep her father from finding out what has been going on.

Notice how James uses the characters of Fanny and Bob Assingham to interweave information about Maggie, the Prince and Charlotte into the story. Their conversations answer many questions about the mechanics of the relationships between these characters. Although Bob seems slow to understand Fanny's views of the situation, it is this slowness that allows situations and relations to be explained clearly to him as well as the reader.

The image of the cracked golden bowl resurfaces in chapter ten. Although the Prince and Charlotte hope their day together will not be cracked and therefore ruined, like the

bowl, they do not realize their actions are causing a crack in both of their marriages. It is perhaps these marriages that are represented by the bowl, beautiful, but cracked and damaged.



Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 1-3

Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 1-3 Summary

In the first chapter of this second volume James describes Maggie's coming to terms with the developing relationship between Charlotte and the Prince. On the day that the Prince is to return from Matcham with Charlotte, she decides to do something that will strike him as unusual. Where generally she had arranged to be at her father's when he arrived home, today she plans to be at home, waiting for him. When he does arrive Maggie tells him how much she loves and needs him. The Prince briefly tells her of his and Charlotte's cathedral hunting adventure then goes upstairs to bathe and dress before dinner.

In the second chapter Maggie recalls a conversation she had with Fanny at Fawns. In this conversation Fanny had compared the relationship of Maggie, the Prince, Mr. Verver and Charlotte to a wagon, a wagon that works smoothly when all four wheels work together. Maggie realizes that for a long time she and her father have not been pushing or pulling but instead sitting inside the wagon letting the Prince and Charlotte do all the work. At the conclusion of the chapter Maggie decides to meet also with Charlotte and hear all about the visit to the cathedrals. After this initial re-introduction, Maggie and Charlotte become the friends they once were in school. Maggie knows all the while she must carry out her plan to separate Charlotte and the Prince without her father knowing what is happening. At the end of the chapter it is learned that Maggie feels very alone in her situation.

In Chapter three Maggie tries to devise a plan to keep from going out of town with her father on a promised journey. At a dinner party six guests strike Maggie's fancy as being able to be used by her in her plan. She begs these six to come to a party at her own home. In light of the pleasant manner life at home has taken on, Maggie's father states they will not go on their trip as planned. On their way home Maggie suggests her husband propose a trip to her father, a trip that her father and the Prince will take together. Although Maggie believes this plan would work out beautifully, the Prince startles her by suggesting that Charlotte be the one to introduce the idea to Mr. Verver.

Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 1-3 Analysis

In these chapters Maggie responds to her crisis just as Fanny forecast she would. Although Maggie is not in the habit of using people, she tries to learn to do so in order to get information about Charlotte and the Prince's relationship. All the time she is doing this, she feels false and alone but she knows she must put a stop to what is happening and she must do so before her father finds out about it. Notice that Maggie tries to arrange things so that she and Charlotte can have some time alone without the Prince and her father present.



Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 4-6

Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 4-6 Summary

In Chapter four Maggie believes the Prince is causing her anxiety and enjoying this anxiety as a way of getting in the last word on their conversation about the trip. She also feels as if he is punishing her for pulling away from him as she did. However, the four of them are having a good time together. Since Maggie indicated she and her father wanted to go with Charlotte and the Prince, they are going almost all the time. Maggie has instigated this change, and must see it through to its end.

Maggie throws a dinner party at her home, and is crowned and applauded for her efforts. It is the first time Maggie can remember that she has lived up to the expectations people had for her as a princess. After this party Maggie tries to discuss Charlotte with her husband but cannot do so without seeming as if she is jealous of her stepmother's relationship with her father. One day when the baby is sick, Maggie's father comes to visit her alone. Maggie is also alone without the Prince and wonders if the Prince and Charlotte are meeting together. More than this, however, she is afraid of this solitary meeting with her father.

In Chapter five Maggie and her father enter the park together and find a pair of quiet chairs where they can talk. One of the things they discuss is the proposed trip Maggie wants the Prince and her father to take. Also during the conversation her father brings up the idea that they are a selfish group that might become even more selfish by making their planned trip to the Fawns. He expects they will have more visitors there this year than in years past. When they return home, they find Charlotte and the Prince seated together on a balcony. The group returning from the park, including the Principino and his nanny, gape at the couple on the balcony.

Maggie decides to call on Fanny's aid in Chapter six. In order to do this, Maggie works up Fanny's involvement in the relationship between her and the Prince since its beginning. After Maggie tells Fanny of the strangeness she sensed in the Prince and Charlotte after their return from the Matcham party, Fanny turns to respond to her. For a moment Maggie sees an expression similar to fear on her friend's face. When Maggie directly asks Fanny what she knows about the Prince and Charlotte, Fanny turns white. Maggie explains she speaks from ideas that have been tormenting her for some time. Maggie feels she has been orchestrating her life and the lives of her immediate family. She feels as if even Charlotte and the Prince have noticed the changes in her, noticed that she has been aware of their new relationship. Fanny, however, tells Maggie she believes there is no indecent relationship between the Prince and Charlotte.



Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 4-6 Analysis

In this section the changes Maggie has made in her life begin to reflect in the lives of her father, her husband and her stepmother. Instead of being two couples, the four of them begin to associate and actually have a good time together. Although Maggie and her father feel hurried and jarred by the pace of the new social life, they hold up to it as best they can.

Maggie's main issue in this section is deciding how to go about finding out if there is an improper relationship between the Prince and Charlotte without her father learning what she is up to. It is important to keep in mind that at this point, Maggie still does not know that Charlotte and the Prince were once involved with each other. In her attempt to find someone to bear her heart to, Maggie seeks out Fanny for consolation. Remember that Fanny is aware of Charlotte and the Prince's past relationship and is having doubts herself as to the morality of the couple's current behavior.

Instead of supporting Maggie's fears, however, Fanny assures Maggie there is no wrong doing going on between Charlotte and the Prince. Fanny instead tells Maggie she is surprised at the amount of character and personality Maggie is showing by bringing up the suggestion. While Fanny indicates she must now change her view of Maggie, she stresses to Maggie that she does not believe there is anything going on between the Prince and Charlotte. If Fanny had voiced her own suspicions to Maggie, she would have had to reveal her knowledge of the former relations between the two, a point she does not want to have to make to Maggie.



Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 7-10

Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 7-10 Summary

In this chapter arrangements are made for the Ververs, the Assinghams and Maggie and the Prince to migrate to Fawns. As the Assinghams discuss their plans, they remind each other of the way in which they must lie to Maggie about the situation between Charlotte and the Prince. Fanny is aware that if the secret of the Prince and Charlotte's former relationship comes out, she could be accused of conspiracy. Although Mr. Assingham suggests there might be someone who knows about the alleged affair and would tell, Fanny believes that the Prince and Charlotte's secret, if they have one, is safe.

In Chapter eight the Ververs travel to Fawns, leaving Maggie and the Prince alone in London for one week. What Maggie fears worse than anything is a confrontation with her husband about his actions. Yet at the same time, she hopes that he will come forward with an apology and explanation. The chapter concludes with Maggie calling Fanny to her room just before a dinner party. From the atmosphere of the room, and Maggie's looks, Fanny fears Maggie knows about Charlotte and the Prince.

In chapter nine Maggie decides to take a stroll through the streets of London. During this stroll she comes across a shop where she purchases a birthday gift for her father. This item, as Maggie now points out to Fanny, is the golden bowl. Maggie tells Fanny she has learned that Charlotte and the Prince knew each other long before Maggie and the Prince ever met. She has set the cup on her mantel so that her husband will see it when he next comes to visit her.

Now that Maggie at last knows how familiar Fanny was with the situation, they are able to talk freely about the reasons for both Maggie's marriage and her father's marriage. Maggie points to blame at herself, believing her father married only for Maggie's sake. Fanny tries to reassure the girl that not everything need be known. She attempts to convince her to not meddle in the relationship between her father and Charlotte, as they are still happy together.

Fanny goes back to the bowl, which she lifts in her hands. She tells Maggie she does not believe what Maggie thinks the bowl represents. Maggie tells her the bowl is not gold but crystal, and cracked. Fanny lifts the bowl above her head and drops it, smashing the bowl. The prince walks into the room just as the smashing takes place. Fanny leaves, telling the Prince his wife will explain to him what just took place.

In Chapter ten Maggie reads in the Prince's face the evidence she needs. The Prince, meanwhile, tries to remember of what the fragments on the floor remind him. Maggie finally tells him how she bought the bowl as a birthday present for her father. The shopkeeper, who felt bad about charging her so much for the cracked bowl, had later that day come to the house to tell her of the bowl's flaw. While at the house, the



shopkeeper saw pictures of Charlotte and the Prince, and remembered them as the ones who originally looked at the bowl. This shopkeeper tells Maggie everything about the day Charlotte and the Prince were in his shop, including their desire to give gifts to each other. After she finishes telling the Prince all that she wants to tell him, she leaves him with the statement that he needs to find out the rest of the story.

Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapters 7-10 Analysis

This section of four chapters includes the climax of the novel. The emotional climax seems to occur as Maggie confronts Fanny with the new knowledge that she has about the relationship between the Prince and Charlotte. Maggie seems more upset with her friend, who has lied to her, than she does with her husband. Consider, though, that Maggie suspected her husband of infidelity for some time, she was just looking for proof. On the other hand, Maggie believed that Fanny was telling her the truth concerning her lack of knowledge about a relationship between Charlotte and the Prince. When Maggie hears the story of the bowl, however, she knows that Fanny has lied to her.

The symbolism of the golden bowl is very important in this section. The bowl resurfaces as Maggie chooses it as a gift to her father, as Maggie similarly thought introducing her father to Charlotte was a gift of sorts. However, this bowl is also symbolic of the time that Charlotte and the Prince spent together just before the Prince's marriage to Maggie. By dropping the bowl, Fanny hopes to destroy its symbolism, but the damage has already been done. As the Prince watches, Maggie pieces the bowl back together. The text states the pieces fit perfectly, only needing something to hold them together. This bowl is a symbol of marriage in that it is beautiful and desirable, but it is also a symbol of infidelity because this infidelity comes from giving into something beautiful and desirable, but wrong. The crack in the bowl indicates the lack of perfection in both marriages. The crack could represent the Prince and Charlotte's relationship, or the overly close relationship of Maggie and her father. Either way, some people who see the bowl recognize at once it is flawed while others do not. The prince recognized the flaw right away, while Maggie did not see it at all. In the same way, Maggie was blind to her husband's affair while the Prince had known ever since Charlotte came back into town that a rekindling of their relationship was possible. In the same way, Fanny sees the immoral relationship between the Prince and Charlotte, but like the shopkeeper with his prized bowl, tries to pretend she is not aware of the problem.



Volume Two, Book Fifth, Chapters 1-5

Volume Two, Book Fifth, Chapters 1-5 Summary

In chapter one of this book, all invited parties have gathered at Fawns. Maggie chance to meet with Fanny and tells her that while she is in the dark concerning the Prince's actions, she does not believe he has told Charlotte that Maggie knows about their affair. Maggie does, however, believe the Prince has recognized the change in her and is accepting it because he has left both Maggie and Charlotte alone. At the conclusion of the chapter Maggie sees Charlotte in a cage made by Charlotte's own delusion.

In chapter two Maggie, the Prince, Charlotte, Mr. Verver, and the Assinghams are alone at Fawns. As the others play bridge, Maggie wanders out onto the terrace. She suddenly has a thought that all of the others want her to take responsibility for the affair that has occurred. They want to use her as their scapegoat. As Maggie walks, she notices that Charlotte has left the card game and is looking for her. It is at this point that Maggie realizes what she is most afraid of is the idea that Charlotte will feel the need to confess to Mr. Verver and in this way let him know what has happened.

Instead, Charlotte asks Maggie if she has done anything to offend her or if she has failed her in any way. In this question Maggie follows Amerigo's lead and tells Charlotte that she has done nothing to offend her. As Amerigo has covered for Maggie, Maggie now covers for him. Maggie finds it hard to comply when Charlotte asks Maggie to kiss her cheek for proof that there are no hard feelings held. Maggie does so only to find the rest of the party have stopped their card game and are watching to two ladies.

In chapter three Maggie and her father spend an afternoon together just as they did before he was married. In this conversation Maggie tries to prove to her father that she is jealous. Mr. Verver threatens to take Charlotte and go back to live at American City if Maggie does not stop speaking of her jealousy. In the conclusion of the chapter Maggie tells her father she still believes in him, and they embrace.

Chapter four returns to the prior action of Maggie's kiss to Charlotte. Although the Assinghams and the Prince had all witnessed the action, none of them had made a comment about its meaning. As this chapter describes the day to day life at Fawns, images of Charlotte as being bound are seen. For instance, she is described as being led by her husband by a silken rope. As company visits the home, Charlotte more and more takes them on a tour of her husband's gallery of art and collectibles. As this performance is repeated over and over again, her voice becomes to Maggie like a cry of pain. The Prince, in fact, escapes to London, Maggie believes, to keep from hearing Charlotte's voice.

In chapter five the group at Fawns is having lunch with Father Mitchell. Charlotte has not attending lunch as the result of a headache. After the meal is finished and the group begins to leave Maggie feels as if the priest is telling her to go to Charlotte. Maggie



meets with Fanny briefly who asks if Maggie is sure she wants them to stay on at Fawns. Maggie asks her to stay as part of her support circle. Fanny tells Maggie that she has been successful in her venture because she feels Mr. Verver is going to relocate himself and his wife to American City. Fanny believes it is the idea of this move that has caused Charlotte to act as she is. Later that day Maggie sees Charlotte walking in the garden and goes to her under the guise of giving her a book. Charlotte tells Maggie that she has decided the Charlotte and Mr. Verver need to go back to America. She says that she wants Mr. Verver to make a break with his daughter. Charlotte also accuses Maggie of having caused her problems in her marriage.

Volume Two, Book Fifth, Chapters 1-5 Analysis

The most interesting aspect of this section of the novel is the way in which Maggie acts as she is waiting for her husband to come to some sort of decision about their future. Although she could have lashed out at others and called blame, she instead acts as normally as possible. Ironically, it is Charlotte who becomes angry with Maggie for interfering in her marriage. Charlotte tells Maggie that she believes Maggie loathed the idea of Charlotte marrying her father from the first, and set about causing problems for them. At this point, however, Maggie knows that her father plans to take Charlotte back to American City, an idea Charlotte is not pleased with but pretends for Maggie's benefit the move was her idea. Charlotte plans to use this move to permanently separate Maggie from her father, just as Charlotte will be permanently separated from the Prince.



Volume Two, Book Sixth, Chapters 1-3

Volume Two, Book Sixth, Chapters 1-3 Summary

Although Maggie has offered to go with the Prince anywhere he wants, the Prince insists on staying near London in case, it is supposed by Maggie and Fanny, Charlotte comes to see him one last time. Maggie also tells Fanny of Charlotte's plan to separate Maggie from her father, an action Maggie feels is unjust.

In the second chapter of this section Charlotte telegrams a request to have tea with Maggie and the Prince before Charlotte and her husband leave for America. Maggie shows the Prince the telegram who asks Maggie what she wants him to do about the news. Maggie suggests that her father may want to take her out to dinner alone, as they did in old times, thus leaving the Prince and Charlotte alone also. At this suggestion, the Prince insists that it is best the Charlotte and Mr. Verver are going to America now. He does not share Maggie's idea that Charlotte is unhappy. After their conversation and Maggie tries to leave the room, the Prince comes close to her, but she forces him to wait.

Chapter three is the concluding chapter. In this chapter Charlotte and Mr. Verver say their goodbyes to Maggie and the Prince and are gone. Once they are gone Maggie realizes that it was this idea of being completely alone with the Prince, her husband, that was her goal for so long. As the novel ends, James notes that even though Maggie tries to watch the carriage carrying her father away from her leaving, all the Prince can see is Maggie.

Volume Two, Book Sixth, Chapters 1-3 Analysis

The image of being caged or trapped appears for a final time in this section. As Maggie enters the room where the Prince is to tell him about their invitation to tea, Maggie notices that the Prince looks as if he is caged. Notice that the Prince makes no comment in favor or against the idea that he might be left alone with Charlotte. His only response is that he believes it is a good idea that Charlotte and Mr. Verver are going away.

Maggie is upset about Mr. Verver and Charlotte's leaving for two reasons. First, in order to be alone with her husband, she must sacrifice her relationship with her father. Second, in order to have her husband to herself, Charlotte must go to America, a place Maggie knows Charlotte does not like. Even though the Prince believes Charlotte is not unhappy with the move, Maggie still believes their union will be made stronger by Charlotte's unhappiness. At the end of the novel, however, Maggie realizes every thing that she has done has been worth the effort as she is the only thing that her husband can now see.



Characters

Prince Amerigo

Prince Amerigo is the leading male character of this novel. He is the descendant of former, but now defunct, Italian royalty. The Prince is named after Amerigo Vespucci, the same man after whom the country of America is named. The Prince is described as an attractive man, one to whom many women have been attracted. One of his former lovers is Charlotte Stant, a woman who re-appears in London shortly before the Prince's marriage to Maggie Verver, the daughter of a wealthy collector. Although the Prince and Charlotte had considered marriage, their lack of money prohibited this union. It is stated in the novel that the Prince is one who could not live without money. While his marriage to Maggie provides him with plenty of money, it also provides Maggie's father with another bit of living history to add to his collection. Since his wife spends more time with her father than with her husband, the Prince winds up re-initiating his relationship with Charlotte. After Maggie learns of the affair between the Prince and Charlotte, the Prince is mostly concerned with whether or not Maggie has told her father about the affair yet. Although the Prince's actions are not in the least heroic or princely, his wife continues to describe his actions as being exemplary and worthy of commendation.

Maggie Verver

Maggie Verver is the daughter of Adam Verver and the wife of the Prince. She is the heroine of the book. The book is about Maggie's awakening and the steps that she takes to save her marriage while at the same time protecting her father from the knowledge that his wife has had an affair. At the beginning of the novel, Maggie is an innocent child who has had to deal with no real troubles in her life. At the end of the novel Maggie stands as a woman, the only woman her husband can see, who has brilliantly come through a possibly life changing crisis.

It might be easy to blame Maggie for her own problems as her close relationship with her father pushes Charlotte and the Prince together. At the beginning of their marriages, Maggie and her son spend more time at her father's home than at their own home. When Maggie becomes aware that there is something strange going on, the only way she knows to make her husband aware of this knowledge is to actually be present at home when he arrives there. Although this may seem a small thing, both Maggie and the Prince recognize its significance. It is through other small moves, such as this one, that Maggie is able to get the idea of her feelings about the on-going affair across to her husband. She neither accuses nor asks for explanations, only lets the Prince know what she knows, then leaves him alone.



Charlotte Stant

Charlotte Stant is the wife of Adam Verver and both the past and present lover of the Prince. Charlotte was friends with Maggie during their school days. It is this friendship that Charlotte uses as a cover to reappear in her friend's life just as she is preparing to marry the Prince. Under the cover of choosing a wedding gift for Maggie, Charlotte devises a plan to spend time with the Prince. It is during this time that the two are overheard by the shopkeeper talking about how they would like to give gifts to one another. When Charlotte marries Adam Verver, she becomes Maggie's stepmother. Near the end of their relationship, as her husband has asked her to go to America with him, Charlotte makes a show of trying to find out if she has done anything to offend her step-daughter. This show ends with her persuading Maggie to give her a kiss as a way to prove there are no hard feelings. In a later discussion between the two ladies, however, Charlotte makes it clear to Maggie that she blames the girl for her current conditions. Although Charlotte is in the wrong for cheating with Maggie's husband, it turns out that Charlotte is angry with Maggie instead of vice versa.

Adam Verver

Adam Verver is the father of Maggie and the husband of Charlotte Verver. He is a wealthy American collector who has been living in London gathering up a store of collectibles. It is his desire one day to construct a museum in American City, his and Maggie's hometown, which he will fill with these collectibles. It is his decision to go back to America and start work on the museum that allows Maggie and the Prince the privacy they need to build their relationship. Mr. Verver marries Charlotte merely on the basis of her usefulness to him. He does not really want to marry again but sees that his being unmarried puts Maggie in an uncomfortable position.

Fanny Assingham

Fanny Assingham is a friend of Maggie and Adam Verver as well as Charlotte Stant and the Prince. Fanny is the one who introduces Maggie to the Prince and in this way facilitates their marriage. Fanny also recommends Charlotte to Mr. Verver as an exemplary mate. In addition, it is also to Fanny that the Prince looks for his source of guidance during his marriage. Through the course of the novel, however, Fanny is mainly concerned with protecting her own reputation rather than giving good advice to those whom she has promised to look after. For instance, although Fanny sees the danger of the relationship between Charlotte and the Prince rekindling, she does nothing to discourage or prevent this rekindling. Note also the name that James' chooses for this gossipy, meddling lady. She appears to be nothing but a fanny.



Colonel Robert 'Bob' Assingham

Bob Assingham is a retired Army man who does not understand his wife's need to meddle in other people's business. Although he does not understand her reasons for meddling, Bob spends hours listening to his wife try to work out in her mind how she should handle other people's problems for them. He offers a bit of comic relief as he struggles to understand his wife's viewpoint.

Bloomsbury Street shopkeeper

It is this shopkeeper who offers the golden bowl for sale. He is not given a proper name during the course of the novel. The Prince sees this man, who eavesdrops on his private conversation to Charlotte, as a swindling Jew. Maggie, however, is awed by the man's sense of responsibility. She is glad that he chose to be honest with her about the flaw in the bowl.

Mrs. Rance

Mrs. Rance is one of the many regular visitors to the Fawns. It is Mrs. Rance who arranges to be caught alone with Mr. Verver one Sunday when all of the others are at church. One reason that Mr. Verver marries Charlotte is to discourage women like Mrs. Rance and their advances.

The Principino

The Principino is the son of Maggie and the Prince. Although he is not a major character in the novel, he is one of the bonds that hold Maggie and her father together. At the conclusion of the novel Mr. Verver tells Maggie that he feels even giving up his relationship with his grandson will be worth the end result of the sacrifice.

Lady Castledean

Lady Castledean is among those who attend the party at Matcham with Charlotte and the Prince. She uses Charlotte and the Prince as an excuse to stay behind after her husband leaves so she can see Mr. Blint, her love interest. At first Maggie is afraid to invite Lady Castledean to Fawns for fear she will tell Mr. Verver about Charlotte and the Prince's affair. Fanny reminds her, however, that Lady Castledean probably would not tell because she does not want news of her own affair to circulate.



Objects/Places

London

London is the town in which the Prince and Maggie live at the time they are married.

Rome

Rome is the place where the Prince proposed to Maggie.

American City

The American City is the place in America that is Maggie and Adam Verver's hometown and the place where Mr. Verver hopes to build his museum.

The Oratory

The Oratory is the location where Maggie and the Prince are married.

Portland Place

Portland Place is the name of Adam and Charlotte Verver's home.

Cadogan Place

Cadogan Place is the location in London where Fanny Assingham and her husband live.

The Fawns

The Fawns is the name of Adam Verver's country home.

A Pin-cushion from the Baker-Street Bazaar

It is this item that Charlotte jokes she will give to Maggie as a wedding gift.

Bloomsbury Street

Bloomsbury Street is the location of the shop where the golden bowl is for sale.



The Golden Bowl

The golden bowl is a gold decorated crystal bowl that Charlotte considers as a wedding gift for Maggie. Maggie later buys the bowl as a present for her father.

Palazzo Nero

The Palazzo Nero is the Prince's home in Rome.

Brighton

It is after a few days vacation in Brighton that Mr. Verver asks Charlotte to marry him.

Telegraph from the Prince

This telegraph that Charlotte receives from the Prince when she is trying to decide whether or not to marry Mr. Verver carries an ambiguous message which can be interpreted to have both positive and negative meanings.



Themes

The Politics of Marriage

In many ways this novel presents marriage as a political affair. While modern Americans generally marry for love and affection, the characters in this novel seem to view marriage as a way either to move up the social ladder or a means of accessing what their mate can provide for them. For instance, when the Prince marries Maggie, one of his thoughts is that he is now associated with, and is in fact, one of the rich. It is suggested, on the other hand, that Maggie marries the Prince because of his historical background. She is, in a way, adding this piece of Italian royalty to her father's collection. When Mr. Verver marries, he chooses a spouse who can be useful to him. Charlotte fills in the gap that Maggie left behind when she married the Prince. One can only guess that Charlotte married Mr. Verver as a way to get close to the Prince again.

It is also important to note that in much the same way these politics determine who one should marry, they also determine those who should not marry one another. For instance, it is stated that the Prince and Charlotte could not marry because of their lack of money. It is assumed from the beginning that any marriage where a great deal of money was not possessed would automatically be doomed to failure. In fact, Charlotte runs away from the Prince in order to keep their relationship from going any further. For a while they have a perfect relationship. The Prince and Charlotte both depend on their spouses for their social standing and monetary funding, but are able to enjoy each other's physical company.

The Symbolism of the Golden Bowl

The golden bowl is a highly symbolic object throughout the entire novel. The bowl is first seen when Charlotte and the Prince go on their shopping trip together. Although the bowl is to be a wedding gift to Maggie, Charlotte speaks in the store of giving it as a gift to the Prince. The Prince seems to recognize right away that the bowl is flawed and walks away from it. As the shopkeeper continues to press Charlotte to buy the bowl, she realizes there must be something wrong with it and also leaves the store without making a purchase.

Note that the bowl is made of crystal and gilded with gold. It is very beautiful to look at and appears tempting. In truth, however, the flaw in the crystal makes it weaker and causes it to crack easily if dropped. Note that Charlotte suggests to the storekeeper that crystal might crack if thrown on a marble floor. This statement closely mirrors what actually happens to the bowl when Fanny drops it in front of Maggie. When the bowl is dropped, it splits into three perfect pieces. The text states that if Maggie had something to bind the bowl together, the broken pieces would have fit perfectly.



Therefore, the bowl is a symbol of the Prince and Charlotte's adultery because it is through the purchase of the bowl that Maggie learns of their unfaithfulness. However, it is also a symbol of marriage in general. Marriage between two people can be a beautiful relationship, but even the best marriages have flaws. These flaws cause these marriages to be susceptible to breaking up if they encounter any stress or pressure, as the golden bowl breaks when dropped on the floor. These marriages, however, can be put back together if there is love and faith to hold them together.

Maggie's Transformation

Maggie's maturity is an important theme in this novel. It is not that she is not mature at the beginning of the novel, but she has yet had any real hardships to deal with at this point. It is only at the point that she deals successfully with her husband's affair that she becomes a truly mature and beautiful woman in her husband's eyes.

Notice that throughout the novel Maggie is referred to by almost all characters, even Charlotte, as a beautiful, kind creature who does not know what evil is. When faced with the evilness of her husband's affair, however, Maggie seems to recognize this evil before she even is really sure what is happening. Her response to this affair is not to blame others, but to take an active role in correcting the problems that led to the affair. She makes a point to attend more social functions and gives her husband and Charlotte fewer opportunities to be alone.

In addition to keeping her marriage, Maggie's second main goal in the novel is to keep her father from learning that Charlotte has been unfaithful to him. Throughout the book, Maggie plans and strategizes so that her father will not be exposed to the truth about his wife. Although Maggie could have sought pity, she instead chooses to protect those she loves from the pain she feels. The only person that Maggie opens up to through her whole ordeal is Fanny, a woman whom Maggie believes knew the truth about the affair from the start.



Style

Point of View

This novel is written in the third person point of view. The narrator knows minute details of each character's thought processes and decisions as they work their way through the problems and situations in which they find themselves. Therefore, the narrator is not only omniscient but also reliable in his statements. This reliable and all knowing view point is important since so much of the novel surrounds the thoughts and emotions of the characters. Occasionally, the narrator will deviate from his third person role and write directly to his audience. For instance, in some places he will refer to a character as "our friend" or insert an opinion where he refers to himself in the first person.

This story is told mainly through exposition with the author including much detail about each character's own personal thoughts and motivations. There is limited dialogue where characters actually speak to one another and this dialogue generally is a way for one character to tell another what they are thinking or feeling. Probably less than twenty-five percent of the novel is dialogue while the remainder is made of long descriptions of the characters thoughts.

Setting

This novel is set in London, England. The action occurs in several different sets in London, including the shop on Bloomsbury Street and Cadogan Place, the home of Fanny and Bob Assingham. Portland Place is the home of Charlotte and Adam Verver, while Eaton Square is where Maggie and the Prince live. It is assumed the two houses are close to each other as the two couples visit each other frequently. Fawns is the country home belonging to Adam Verver. The two couples, along with Bob and Fanny Assingham, retreat to Fawns during the summer. Another important setting in this movie is Brighton. It is during a trip to Brighton that Mr. Verver proposes to Charlotte.

Places that are mentioned in the book but are not actually included in the action include American City. This city, located in America, is Maggie and Adam's hometown. It is this town to which Mr. Verver and Charlotte relocate at the end of the novel. It is here that Mr. Verver hopes to build his museum where his art collection will be displayed. Another location mentioned in the book, but not actually included, is the city of Rome. Rome is where the Prince proposed to Maggie.

Language and Meaning

James tends to write in long, complex sentences in which it is easy for the reader to get lost. In addition, these long complex sentences deal with the complexity of the human mind and its changing opinions and emotions. It is as if James tries to capture the internal workings of the mind as it works through the emotions and drawbacks of the



situations in which it finds itself and put these workings down on paper. Although there are instances where the reader knows that a great deal of time has passed between one incident and another, it is almost impossible to determine when actually things are happening as there is little or no reference to time. It is only known at the end of the novel that about four years have passed since the marriage of Maggie and the Prince. However, James did not intend for his novel to focus on when something happened; he instead wanted to focus to be on the characters' responses to what was happening around them.

With James' emphasis on characters' emotions, it can sometimes be difficult to determine to whom or to what a certain passage is referring. This is especially true when other characters are simply referred to as he or she. There are also few or no personal touches that allow the reader to distinguish one character's thoughts from another. All of the descriptive passages are presented in the same type of language with no inflections or differentiations.

Structure

This novel is divided into two almost equal volumes. The first volume is entitled "The Prince" while the second is entitled "The Princess." Within these volumes, the novel is divided into books with the first volume containing four books while the second volume contains three books. Generally each of these books ends with some major breakthrough in the action of the novel. For instance, Book First ends with the conclusion of Charlotte and the Prince's shopping trip. Another example of this includes Book Fourth, which concludes with Maggie's discussion with the Prince over the broken golden bowl.

The main and only plot of the novel is the story of the two couples' marriages. Since James delves very closely into each character's feelings and emotions, the pace of the novel is very slow. There are also sections in the book where the reader is carried back in time by James in order to fill them in on details about one character or another's life experiences. Although they are sometimes time consuming, these flashbacks are well placed and flow nicely with the rest of the book.



Quotes

"There are two parts of me'—yes, he had been moved to go on. 'One is made up of history, the doings, the marriages, the crimes, the follies, the boundless bêtises of other people—especially of their infamous waste of money that might have come to me. Those things are written—literally in rows of volumes, in libraries; are as public as they're abominable. Everybody can get at them, and you've both of you wonderfully looked them in the face. But there's another part, very much smaller doubtless, which, such as it is, represents my single self, the unknown, the unimportant—unimportant save to you—personal quality. About this you've found out nothing." Volume One, Book First, Chapter One, p. 47.

"He had got it, the pitch, and he could keep it now, for all he needed was to have it given him. The pitch was the happiness of his wife that was to be—the sight of that happiness as a joy for an old friend." Volume One, Book First, Chapter Three, p. 77.

"She's incapable of any plan to hurt a hair of her head. Yet here she is—and there they are." Volume One, Book First, Chapter Four, p. 89.

"She'd be so frightened. She'd be, in her strange little way, so hurt. She wasn't born to know evil. She must never know it." Volume One, Book First, Chapter Four, p. 94.

"Who was there for that matter to raise one from the moment Mrs. Assingham, informed and apparently not disapproving, didn't intervene?" Volume One, Book First, Chapter Five, p. 103.

"There had been something, frankly, a little disconcerting in such an appeal at such an hour, on the very eve of his nuptials; it was one thing to have met the girl casually at Mrs. Assingham's and another to arrange with her thus for a morning practically as private as their old mornings in Rome and practically not less intimate." Volume One, Book First, Chapter Five, p. 105.

"It was a comfort to her that their foreign tongue covered what they said—and they might have appeared of course, as the Prince now had one of the snuff-boxes in his hand, to be discussing a purchase." Volume One, Book First, Chapter Six, p. 116.

"She had been his only child—which she was indeed as much as ever; but there were sides on which she had protected him as if she were more than a daughter. She had done for him more than he knew—much, and blissfully, as he always had known." Volume One, Book Second, Chapter One, p. 135.

"Oh if I'm a crystal I'm delighted that I'm a perfect one, for I believe they sometimes have cracks and flaws—in which case they're to be had very cheap." Volume One, Book Second, Chapter One, p. 138.



"It was of course an old story and a familiar idea that a beautiful baby could take its place as a new link between a wife and a husband, but Maggie and her father had, with every ingenuity, converted the precious creature into a link between a mamma and a grandpapa." Volume One, Book Second, Chapter Three, p. 151.

"There were things she of course couldn't tell him, in so many words, about Amerigo and herself, and about their happiness and their union and their deepest depths—and there were other things she needn't; but there were also those that were both true and amusing, both communicable and real, and of these, with her so conscious, so delicately-cultivated scheme of conduct as a daughter, she could make her profit at will." Volume One, Book Second, Chapter Three, p. 157.

"Should you really,' he now asked, 'like me to marry?' He spoke as if, coming from his daughter herself, it might be an idea; which for that matter he would be ready to carry right straight out should she definitely say so." Volume One, Book Second, Chapter Four, p. 161.

"I've an idea there has been, more than once, somebody I'm not acquainted with—and needn't be or want to be. In any case it's all over, and, beyond giving her credit for everything, it's none of my business." Volume One, Book Second, Chapter Four, p. 170.

"This pulse of life was what Charlotte, in her way, at home, had lately reproduced, and there were positively current hours when it might have been open to her companion to feel himself again, indebted to her for introductions." Volume One, Book Second, Chapter Six, p. 189.

"She was herself in truth crowned, and it all hung together, melted together, in light and colour and sound: the unsurpassed diamonds that her head so happily carried, the other jewels, the other perfections of aspect and arrangement that made her personal scheme a success, the proved private theory that materials to work with had been all she required and that there were none too precious for her to understand and use—to which might be added lastly, as the strong-scented flower of the total sweetness, an easy command, a high enjoyment, of her crisis." Volume One, Book Third, Chapter One, p. 214.

"She had already accepted her consciousness, as we have already noted, that a crisis for them all was in the air; and when such hours weren't depressing, which was the form indeed in which she had mainly known them, they were apparently in a high degree exhilarating." Volume One, Book Third, Chapter One, p. 217.

"You surely must by this time have seen for yourself that he has his own habits and his own ways, and that he makes, more and more, as of course he has a perfect right to do—his own discriminations. He's so perfect, so ideal as a father, and doubtless largely by that very fact, so generous, so comfortable, so admirable a father-in-law, that I should really feel is base to avail myself of any standpoint whatever to criticize him." Volume One, Book Third, Chapter Two, p. 231.



"And so for a minute they stood together as strongly held and as closely confronted as any hour of their easier past even had seen them. They were silent at first, only facing and faced, only grasping and grasped, only meeting and met." Volume One, Book Third, Chapter Five, p. 259.

"It had been established in the two households at an early stage and with the highest good humour that Charlotte was a, was THE, 'social success', whereas the Princess, though kind, though punctilious, though charming, though in fact the dearest little creature in the world and THE Princess into the bargain, was distinctly not, would distinctly never be, and might as well give it up altogether; whether through being above it or below it, too much outside of it or too much lost in it, too unequipped or too indisposed, didn't especially matter." Volume One, Book Third, Chapter Six, p. 262.

"It was amusing, in such lightness of air, that the Prince should again present himself only to speak for the Princess, again so unfortunately able to leave home; and that Mrs. Verver should as regularly figure as an embodied, a beautifully deprecating apology for her husband, who was all geniality and humility among his own treasures, but as to whom the legend had grown up that he couldn't bear, with the height of his standards and the tone of the company, in the way of sofas and cabinets, habitually kept by him, the irritation and depression to which promiscuous visiting even at pompous houses had been found to expose him." Volume One, Book Third, Chapter Seven, p. 273.

"I don't make mistakes. But I perpetrate—in thought—crimes." Volume One, Book Third, Chapter Ten, p. 301.

"'They're away,' she wound up, 'so they can't hear; and I'm by a miracle of arrangement not at luncheon with father at home. I live in the midst of miracles of arrangement, half of which I admit are my own; I go about on tiptoe, I watch for every sound, I feel every breath, and yet I try all the while to seem as smooth as old satin dyed rose-colour.'" Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapter Six, p. 401.

"She can utterly dishonour me with her father. She can let him know that I was aware at the time of his marriage—as I had been aware at the time of her own—of the relations that had pre-existed between his wife and her husband." Volume Two, Book Fourth, Chapter Seven, p. 411.

"It was the first sharp falsity she had known in her life, to touch at all or be touched by; it had met her like some bad-faced stranger surprised in on of the thick-carpeted corridors of a house of quiet on a Sunday afternoon; and yet, yes, amazingly, she had been able to look at terror and disgust only to know that she must put away from her the bitter-sweet of their freshness." Volume Two, Book Fifth, Chapter One, p. 489.

"'Lost to each other—father and I.' And then as her friend appeared to demur, 'Oh yes,' Maggie quite lucidly declared, 'lost to each other really more than Amerigo and Charlotte are; since for them it's just, it's right, it's deserved, while for us it's only sad and strange and not caused by our fault.'" Volume Two, Book Sixth, Chapter One, p. 555.

"It's as if her unhappiness had been necessary to us—as if we had needed her, at her own cost, to build us up and start us." Volume Two, Book Sixth, Chapter Two, p. 551.



Topics for Discussion

Consider Maggie's marriage to the Prince. Is it a marriage of love, or is the Prince simply an item, a relic, that Maggie and her father add to their collection?

Consider the idea presented in the first chapter of the novel that science is the "absence of prejudice backed by the presence of money." Do you believe this idea is correct? Why or why not?

Explore the symbolism of the golden bowl as it appears in different sections of the novel. What effect does it have on the various characters? Why is it so significant?

Consider Charlotte's actions. In what way is she responsible for the problems between Maggie and the Prince? Do you believe Charlotte is completely at fault or were there other circumstances that lead to her affair with the Prince? Explain your answer.

Describe Fanny Assingham's role in the novel. Do you believe she acted as she should have, or should she have treated the situation she saw developing between the Prince and Charlotte differently? Why or why not?

How much do you believe Maggie's father knew of Charlotte and the Prince's affair? Defend your answer.

Do you believe Charlotte's move back to America was a just punishment for her actions? What is your opinion of Charlotte's attempt to end Maggie's relationship with her father? Explain your answers.

In your opinion, what did the telegraph that Charlotte receives from the Prince before her marriage to Mr. Verver mean? Give examples to support your opinion.