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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Daisy Miller

by Henry James

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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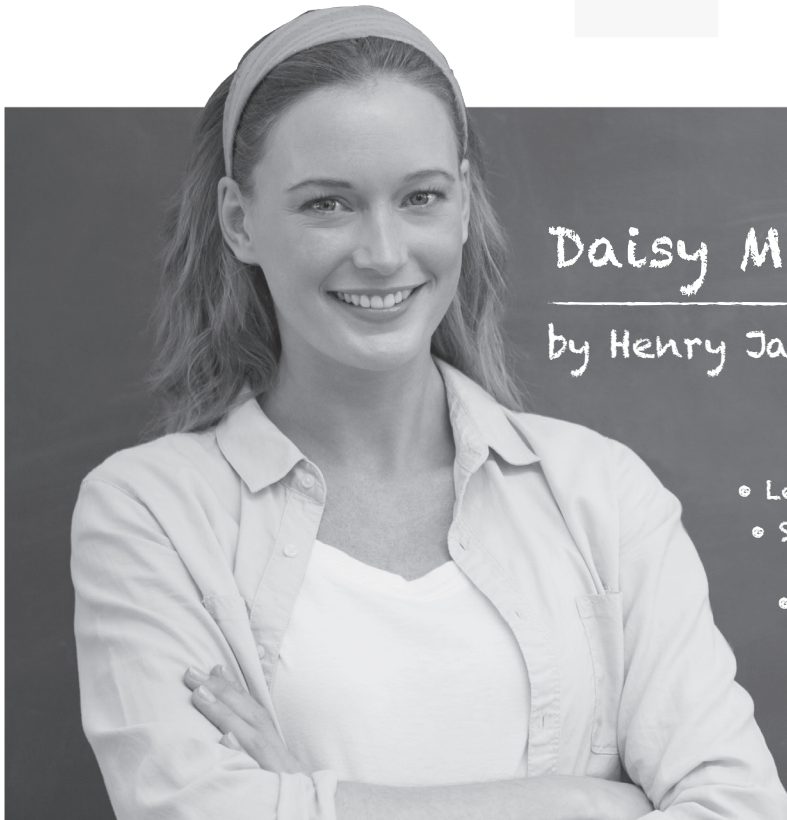
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Daisy Miller

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. identify and discuss James' use of appearance versus reality to create ambiguous messages.
2. identify and discuss the following themes in this tale:
 - American innocence and exuberance confronts old-world customs and values.
 - Daisy, representing the innocent American, being martyred by Americans who “have lived too long in Europe.”
 - A love story of lost opportunity.
3. discuss James' use of “the central intelligence” as a point of focus in this story.
4. discuss James' style in terms of the type of words and sentences he uses, and why such a style is appropriate for this kind of novel.

Daisy Miller

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. As the title suggests, the story is about Daisy Miller and it is narrated by an omniscient narrator. Much of what we know about Daisy we learn from Frederick Winterbourne, which is why he is called “the central intelligence” by some critics. Identify what Frederick thinks or suspects about Daisy as the novel opens, progresses, and concludes. Be sure to indicate how his bias might influence his perceptions.
2. This story presents a clash of cultures and values. Consider what Daisy, Randolph, and Mrs. Miller represent as Americans from New York, and what Winterbourne, Mrs. Costello, and Mrs. Walker represent as Europeanized Americans. Over what specifics do these cultures clash?
3. Mrs. Costello does not believe that her American granddaughters could possibly resemble the “uncultivated” Daisy Miller; however, Frederick hears that the granddaughters are “tremendous flirts.” How and why might the granddaughters deceive Mrs. Costello?
4. When Frederick discovers Daisy and Giovanelli in the Coliseum, Daisy says “He [Frederick] looks at us as one of the old lions or tigers may have looked at the Christian martyrs!” Both Frederick and Giovanelli also use the word “innocent” to describe Daisy. If James portrays Daisy as an innocent martyr, who kills her and for what belief does she die?
5. Henry James uses the conflict of appearance versus reality to explain human behavior and create ambiguity. For this type of tale, how does ambiguity make the narrative seem more psychologically realistic? In your explanation, cite those incidents in the tale that support your generalizations.
6. Compared to Hemingway’s modernist style, James’ writing appears wordy or pretentious because it contains more rhetoric and elaborate description. Why is James’ elaborate writing style particularly appropriate for the characters and the theme of Daisy Miller?
7. Mr. Giovanelli plays a central role in this tale. How do Daisy, Mrs. Miller, Winterbourne, and other characters perceive Giovanelli? How do you suppose he perceives himself?
8. Write a half-page character analysis for each of the following: Winterbourne, Daisy, and Mrs. Costello.

Daisy Miller

Chapter 1

1. In what point of view is this story being narrated?

2. Describe the setting.

3. What is being suggested by calling Geneva “the little metropolis of Calvinism”?

4. The first character the reader meets is a 27-year-old man who traveled from Geneva to visit his aunt. What are the two alternative reasons usually given for his choice of Geneva as a place to live?

5. Upon meeting Randolph's sister, what does Winterbourne do in Vevay that he would not do in Geneva?

6. Describe Randolph Miller.

14. Why does Eugenio's tone to strike Winterbourne as "very impertinent"?

15. How does Winterbourne plan to make his relationship with Daisy formally correct and respectable?

16. What is Mrs. Costello's (Winterbourne's aunt) opinion of the Miller family? Why do you suppose she feels this way?

17. How does Mrs. Costello respond to Winterbourne's request that she guarantee his respectability?

18. What is Mrs. Costello's view of Daisy?

19. What question resurfaces in Winterbourne's mind after he meets with his aunt?

20. What seems to be ironic about Daisy's desire to be on exclusive?

15. While speaking to Winterbourne, why does Daisy first confirm and then deny her engagement to Giovanelli?

16. How does Winterbourne explain Daisy's social standing among the American-European community? What will the Americans do to Daisy?

17. What does Daisy exclaim when she sees Winterbourne at the Coliseum?

18. Why is Winterbourne relieved by the sight of Daisy and Giovanelli alone in the moonlight?

19. Why is Winterbourne suddenly concerned about Daisy's health? What is the danger?

20. Explain Winterbourne's statement to Daisy. "I believe that it makes very little difference whether you are engaged or not!"

21. How does Daisy react to Winterbourne's indifference?
