

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Daisy Miller

by Henry James

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Item No. 201624

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

Glossary of French Words and Expressions

amoroso – loved one
assent – to consent or agree
cavaliere avvocato – gentleman lawyer
comme il faut – proper
coquette – a flirt
courier – a person hired to assist with travel; a servant
du meilleur monde – of the best society
“*Elle s’affiche*” – She (Daisy) is making a scene
exiguous – small
impertinent – insolent, inappropriate
inconduite – indiscretion, misconduct
interlocutor – person taking part in a conversation
intime – close friend, intimate
marchese – marquis; nobleman
oubliette – a dungeon
pension – small hotel
perniciosa – malaria
persiflage – banter, ridicule
punctilious – careful about every detail of behavior
qui se passe ses fantaisies – one who is indulging to her whims
rouleaux – a small roll or coil
spurious – false; not genuine
table d’hôte – the common table in the hotel dining room
tout bonnement – just like that
tete-a-tete – private conversation
tournure – of a princess figure
victoria – a four-wheeled carriage

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.

22. At the cemetery, what part of Giovanelli's description of Daisy surprises Winterbourne? Why does Winterbourne react?

23. What does Mrs. Costello infer from Daisy's final message to Winterbourne?

24. What does Winterbourne blame for his mistake with Daisy Miller? Does he change as a result of his experience?
