



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

THE TURN OF THE SCREW

BY HENRY JAMES



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Written by Sophia Harrison

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Henry James's Contemporaries****Objective:** Comparing the author's contemporaries**Activity**

By researching other writing during Henry James's life (1843 – 1916), you will be able to understand the literary environment in which he was writing. Some of the individuals in the following chart wrote in the same genre, while others were very different from James. Research and make notations about the writers Contemporaries Chart.

Complete the chart for each of the names. Record the respective field (for example, poetry, essays, or general literature) for the writer, his or her country of origin, year of birth and death, and any accomplishments. The first one has been completed for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Prologue**Freewrite**

Objective: Reflecting on expressing opinions

Activity

In the prologue to *The Turn of the Screw*, the narrator describes a Christmas party where the visitors are entertaining themselves by telling ghost stories. Reflect on and answer the following questions:

- What is your impression of Douglas?
- What are your thoughts about the governess?
- What kind of comments or observations within the Prologue intrigue you—what details do you want to hear more about?
- Based on some of Douglas's comments, what do you think might happen in the story?

“Freewrite” by writing out your thoughts as they come to you. You should write at least two paragraphs. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The purpose of a freewrite is to express your ideas.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter II**Letter Writing**

Objectives: Identifying details from the text
Writing a letter
Understanding different perspectives

Activity

In Chapter II, the governess realizes that Miles has been expelled from school, and she is shocked and dismayed by this information.

Imagine that you are Miles, and you are writing a letter to your family to tell them that you have been expelled from school. How would you open the letter? Would you go into a lot of detail? Would you be sad? Defensive? Angry? What tone would you use?

Write a letter that you think Miles might send to his family regarding this situation. The message you want to convey must be fully expressed and at least a half page in length.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter IV

Language Game

Objectives: Developing strong communication skills
Using universal language as a means of communication

Activity

In this story, methods of communication between the characters vary. The governess is telling her story through a written memoir. Douglas is retelling the story orally at a Christmas party. Think of examples of universal language that everyone understands. For example, a wave is a gesture that means different things depending on the circumstances; it can be a greeting, a farewell, an expression of thanks, a way to get someone's attention, etc. As you can tell, non-verbal communication is important in our society.

Divide into two teams. Each team will list at least six main ideas or details from the story for the other team to guess. Each team will give its ideas or details to the teacher, who will place them in a container from which the opposing team will draw. Team members will take turns drawing from the container and conveying the ideas for their teammates to guess. Remember, the clues must be given non-verbally—no words are allowed, and you are not permitted to form letters with your hands. You can draw clues or illustrations on the board, use gestures, act out the scene, etc. Continue the process for the remainder of the ideas.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter VI**Vocabulary**

Objectives: Interpreting archaic language
Recognizing different types of language

Activity

In *The Turn of the Screw*, the narrator sometimes uses archaic (old) words and phrases, which may be difficult for a modern reader to understand. Henry James wrote the story in 1898, and authors' writing styles have changed since then.

Interpret the words or phrases listed in the following chart and convert them into contemporary language. If you cannot figure out the meaning of a word from the context, you may use a dictionary to look it up. We have started the list for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter VIII

Characterization

Objective: Interpreting the thoughts and language of a character

Activity

In *The Turn of the Screw*, the governess discusses her experiences with and responses to her encounters with mysterious, supernatural beings. Henry James does not explicitly tell the reader what is happening or the reason behind a character's actions. For example, you must make inferences about the governess's character from the way she describes her actions.

Assume that the governess has been asked by a career counselor to describe herself in terms of her personality, attitude, motivation, and emotions, in order to help the governess find the perfect job.

Form small groups to discuss what information you think the governess would give to the counselor. During your group's discussion, take notes on the sheet provided. Then, create a description of the governess from your notes and how the governess interacts with others in the story. You may use direct quotations.

After all the groups have completed a description of the governess, share your descriptions with the class to compare what others have inferred about the governess from the text.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter XII

Character Letter

Objectives: Interpreting details from the text
Writing a letter

Activity

The governess adamantly refuses to write to her employer because she has strict instructions not to disturb him during her time with his niece and nephew. She also shares the understanding with Mrs. Grose that she believes the employer will think she is trying to get his attention because she is attracted to him. However, although the governess says that contacting her employer is out of the question, consider the possibilities of what might happen if she did contact him.

Imagine you are Mrs. Grose, and you have decided to contact your employer on the governess's behalf by writing a letter and signing her name at the bottom. You must consider the following factors when composing the letter:

- What would Mrs. Grose think is the governess's writing style? (formal, informal, tone, etc.)
- What might Mrs. Grose say to offset the idea that the governess is attracted to her employer?
- Would she tell the employer everything that is happening, or would she merely ask for him to come to Bly?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter XVI

Horoscope

Objectives: Analyzing character traits
Synthesizing clues from the text

Activity

Astrological signs (also known as zodiac signs) are assigned to each month of the year. These signs are associated with certain personality traits, and people born under these signs are said to possess those characteristics. In addition, the signs are ruled by the movements of the planets, which influence many aspects of people's lives. Horoscopes are brief daily or monthly summaries that foretell possible future events or provide guidance based on a person's astrological sign. Some people use horoscopes for this purpose. Others consider them a form of entertainment. Horoscopes were used in Henry James's time as well as ours.

Do some research on the basic characteristics of the twelve astrological signs. Choose a sign for the governess that is similar to her personality. It's not necessary for her to possess all the characteristics of the sign; just choose the one that you think is the best match. Then, imagine that the governess is reading the morning newspaper and wants to consult the monthly horoscope for her sign. Write a brief horoscope for the governess based on the sign you've chosen for her and the events in this chapter. Use the storyline to predict future events and provide advice to the governess.

The following is an example of a horoscope from Mrs. Grose:

"This month you will experience a variety of ups and downs, and you will no longer know what is real. You may think yourself abandoned, but on the 15th, you will discover that you are not alone. Listening to the innocent may lead you astray. A silent companion will tell you something surprising."

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter XX

Writing a Job Description

Objective: Relating literature to life

Activity

In Chapter XX, the governess is devastated when Flora denounces her and denies seeing the ghost of Miss Jessel. The governess is confused and does not know what is going to happen next. Many people would start looking for a new job at this point.

Imagine that you are the governess, and you are going to resign your position because you are tired of all the supernatural events at Bly. Before you leave, your employer wants you to prepare an updated job description that he can use for a Help Wanted advertisement. Take notes on the following, and decide what information you'll include in the description. It is up to you how much information you want to reveal about the events you've encountered so far.

- overview of job
- education
- skills required
- experience
- additional requirements
- hours
- wages
- benefits
- caveats