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The Windmills of your Mind

Henry James is one of the most sophisticated, complex, and elegant writers in American fiction. He had a great influence on the development of what we call the ‘modern’ novel, and his writing served as a bridge between literary realism and literary modernism. The two main innovative aspects of his writing – his imaginative use of **point of view** and his contribution to the creation of the ‘**psychological novel**’ – are closely connected and both are evident in the book you are about to read.

* Who tells the story?

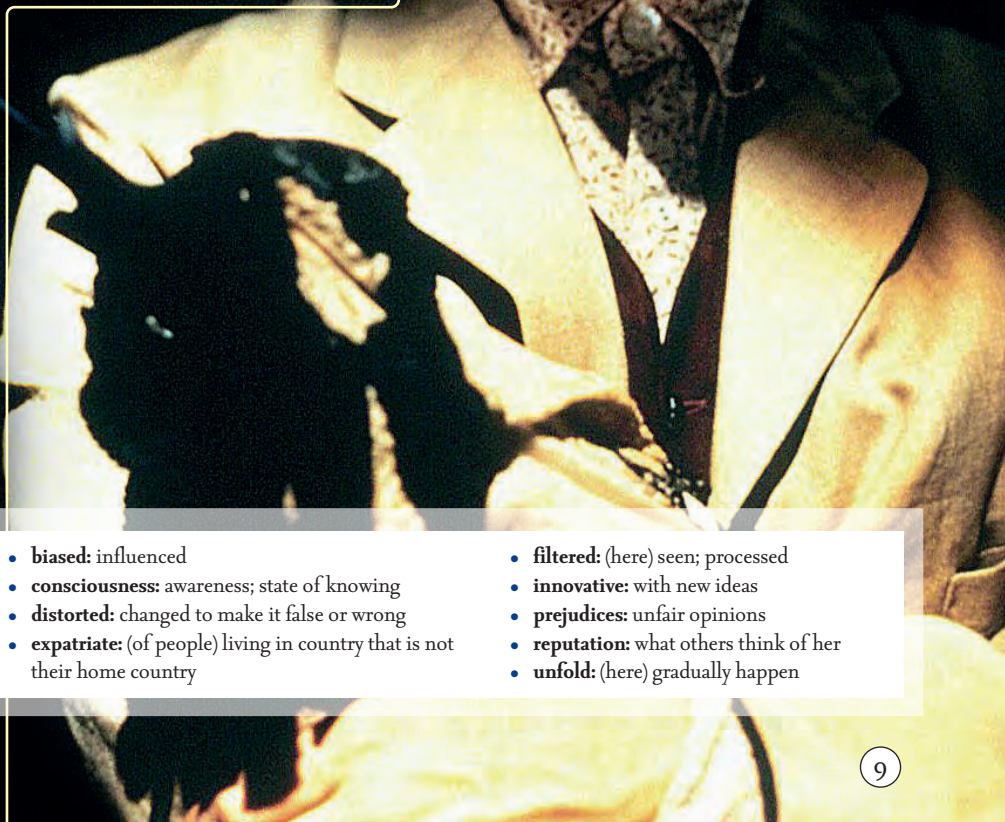
Up until James’s time, fiction was usually written from the point of view of a separate, omniscient (all knowing) third-person narrator. This narrator described or commented on the story but didn’t take part in it. There is a third-person narrator in *Daisy Miller*, too.

However, in James’s story, this narrator is one of the characters and all the events are filtered through his thoughts and feelings, which are inevitably biased by his own experiences. He acts as a ‘central intelligence’, or ‘central consciousness’, and we see everything from his point of view. Daisy’s story (or “study” as the novella’s original subtitle reads) is presented to the reader through the eyes of a young man, Winterbourne, that she meets at the beginning of the story. James lets the story unfold through Winterbourne’s observations, which not only describe the events as he sees them but also give judgement on them. In this way, the author manages to show the difference between what people think is true and the actual truth itself. The reader is led to accept the prejudices and the (mis)judgments of the group of expatriate Americans to which Winterbourne belongs, and to judge Daisy’s behaviour using the same standards. Winterbourne’s opinion of the girl is distorted by his long absence from America, during which he has developed a more European sensibility. By European standards (and those of the expatriates), Daisy’s behaviour is considered to be immoral.



An unreliable narrator *

At first, Winterbourne is attracted by Daisy's fresh and direct manners and he explains her behaviour as her ignorance of the appropriate social rules. But as the story develops, he becomes influenced by the others in his group and is unable to differentiate between the girl's reputation • and her true nature. And it is only at the end of the book that the reader can gain a more positive and sympathetic view of Daisy's character. Therefore, how reliable is Winterbourne as a judge or narrator? Perhaps James's greatest contribution to narrative fiction is the introduction of the unreliable narrator, adding depth and complexity to the narrator's usual vision of reality.



- **biased:** influenced
- **consciousness:** awareness; state of knowing
- **distorted:** changed to make it false or wrong
- **expatriate:** (of people) living in country that is not their home country

- **filtered:** (here) seen; processed
- **innovative:** with new ideas
- **prejudices:** unfair opinions
- **reputation:** what others think of her
- **unfold:** (here) gradually happen

DAISY MILLER



Mrs Miller



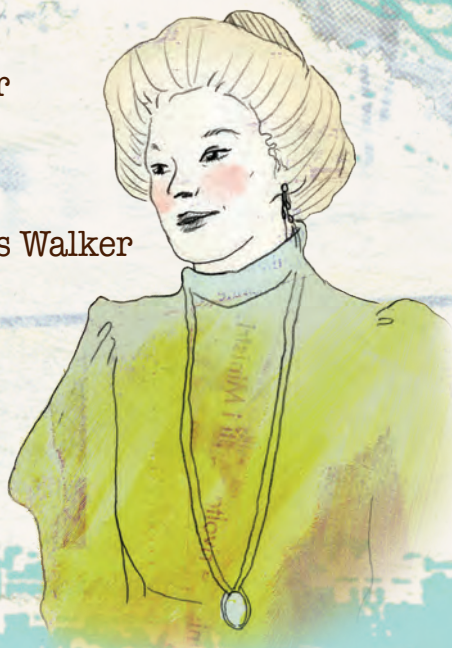
Eugenio



Winterbourne



Randolph Miller






Mrs Walker



Mr Giovanelli


Daisy Miller

BEFORE READING

- 1  Before you read the story, take a look at the characters on pages 12 and 13 and the pictures in the book. Write a list of ten words or expressions that you think will describe the story you are going to read. If possible, work with a partner and compare your lists.
- 2  The title of the story is *Daisy Miller*. What type of story do you think it will be and what do you think it will be about? Discuss the ideas below in groups of three or four. Then share your ideas with the rest of the class.
 - a A love story. A young woman called Daisy will fall in love and get married.
 - b A tragedy. Daisy will make a serious mistake and someone will die as a result.
 - c A mystery. Daisy will be involved in a series of mysterious events.
 - d A family drama. There will be conflict between members of Daisy's family.
 - e A travel story. Daisy will go on a long journey, and learn about life in the process.
- 3 Look at this picture of Daisy Miller. What do you think she is like? Write down questions you would like to ask her.
 Ask and answer with a partner.





- 4  Working with a partner, imagine that you are the parents of a 16-year-old girl. What would you allow her to do and what would you not allow her to do? Write a list.

Now imagine that you are the parents of a 16-year-old boy. Make a list of the things that you would allow him to do and the things you wouldn't allow him to do.

Are your two lists the same or different?

- 5 On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = I don't agree at all; 5 = I totally agree) how far do you agree with the following statements?

- a Living for a long time in a foreign country helps you become more open-minded.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

- b When you live in a foreign country, you should behave just as you would in your own country.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

- c You should be careful not to offend people by doing things they don't approve of.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

- d If you love a person, their upbringing and social class are not important.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

- e Men can make friends with anyone they like, but women cannot.

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐



I



In the little town of Vevey, in Switzerland, there is a most comfortable hotel, which is seated upon the edge of a clear blue lake. The shore of the lake has a range of establishments• of this type. One of the hotels, however, is famous, being distinguished• from many of its neighbors by an air both of luxury and of maturity. In this region, in the month of June, American travellers are extremely numerous. There is a flitting• here and there of “stylish” young girls, a rustling• of muslin• frills, a rattle of dance music in the morning hours, a sound of high-pitched• voices at all times. You receive an impression of these things at the excellent inn• of the “Trois Couronnes”.

I hardly know what was in the mind of a young American, who, two or three years ago, sat in the garden of the “Trois Couronnes”, looking about him, rather idly, at some of the graceful objects I have mentioned. He had come from Geneva the day before by the little steamer•, to see his aunt, who was staying at the hotel – Geneva having been for a long time his place of residence. But his aunt had a headache – his aunt had almost always a headache – and now she was closed in her room, so that he was at liberty• to wander about.

- **at liberty:** (here) free
- **distinguished:** (here) shown to be different
- **establishments:** (here) hotels
- **flitting:** moving about quickly from place to place
- **high-pitched:** with a high and sharp tone

- **inn:** place where you can sleep and eat; guest house
- **muslin:** thin, delicate material used to make dresses
- **rustling:** sound that some materials (silk and muslin) make
- **steamer:** ship with a steam-driven engine

He was some seven-and-twenty years of age. His friends usually said that he was in Geneva “studying”. Other people said that the reason he spent so much time in Geneva was that he was extremely devoted to a lady who lived there – a foreign lady – a person older than himself. Very few Americans had ever seen this lady, about whom there were some curious stories. Winterbourne had gone to school and college in Geneva, and this had led to his forming a great many youthful friendships there. Many of these he had kept, and they were a source of great satisfaction to him.

FRIENDS

Think about your friends.

How and where did you meet them?

How often do you see them?

After learning that his aunt was not feeling well, he had taken a walk about the town, and then he had come in to have breakfast. Now he was drinking a small cup of coffee at a little table in the garden. At last he finished his coffee and lit a cigarette. Soon a small boy of nine or ten came along the path. The child had a pale face, and was dressed in knickerbockers[•], with red stockings, which displayed[•] his poor little thin legs; he also wore a brilliant red cravat[•]. He carried a long alpenstock[•], the sharp point of which he thrust[•] into everything that he approached – the flowerbeds, the garden benches, the trains[•] of the ladies’ dresses. In front of Winterbourne he paused, looking at him with a pair of bright, penetrating eyes.

- **alpenstock:** stick carried by mountain walkers
- **cravat:** informal neck-tie
- **displayed:** showed
- **knickerbockers:** old-fashioned short trousers often worn by young boys
- **thrust:** pushed with great force or power
- **trains:** (here) long pieces of material at the back of ladies’ dresses

‘Will you give me a lump• of sugar?’ he asked in a hard little voice.

Winterbourne glanced• at the small table near him and saw that several pieces of sugar remained. ‘Yes, you may take one,’ he answered; ‘but I don’t think sugar is good for little boys.’

This little boy carefully selected three lumps of sugar, two of which he buried in the pocket of his knickerbockers, depositing• the other in his mouth. He tried to crack• it with his teeth.

‘Oh, it’s har-r-d!’ he exclaimed, pronouncing the adjective in a peculiar• manner.

Winterbourne had immediately perceived• that he might have the honor of claiming him as a fellow countryman. ‘Take care you don’t hurt your teeth,’ he said, paternally.

‘I haven’t got any teeth to hurt. I have only got seven teeth. My mother said she’d slap• me if any more came out. It’s the climate that makes them come out.’

Winterbourne was greatly amused. ‘If you eat three lumps of sugar, your mother will certainly slap you,’ he said.

CHILDHOOD

Think back to when you were a child.

Did you have any habits that annoyed your parents or guardians?

What did they say to you?

- **crack:** break
- **depositing:** putting
- **glanced:** quickly looked at
- **lump:** small pieces

- **peculiar:** strange
- **perceived:** realised
- **slap:** hit with her hand; smack

AFTER READING VOCABULARY

1 Use five of the words in the box to complete the sentences.

privilege scandal deal liberty
least coquette lump peculiar

- a This young girl was not a in that sense. She was only a pretty American flirt.
- b An event that shocks people is called a
- c In Geneva, a young man was not at to speak to a young unmarried lady.
- d The boy pronounced the adjective “hard” in a manner.
- e “A great” means “a lot”.

2  In pairs, create three sentences with the words left out in Exercise 1.3 In the following sentences, **adverbs** have been used instead of **adjectives**, and **adjectives** instead of **adverbs**. Find and correct the mistake in each one. Example: She simple observed the boy. → She SIMPLY observed the boy.

- a The little boy careful selected three lumps of sugar.
- b ‘He probable corresponds to the young lady’s idea of a count.’
- c Before long, it became obviously that she was much disposed towards conversation.
- d ‘Does she never allow you more than three days at a time?’ asked Daisy ironical.
- e One of the hotels is famously, being distinguished from many of its neighbors by an air both of luxury and of maturity.
- f Randolph seemed perfect indifferent; he continued to supply information regarding his own family.
- g I hardly know what was in the mind of a young American, who sat in the garden of the hotel, looking about him, rather idle, at some of the objects I have mentioned.

P B1 Preliminary English Test Reading Part 5**1** Complete the sentences below by choosing the correct answer.

- 1 'This little boy and I have acquaintance.'
 A made B got C done D been
- 2 Daisy is delighted with Europe's high society, she wishes to be part of.
 A where B which C what D whom
- 3 Daisy agrees to visit the castle with Winterbourne they have known each other for only half an hour.
 A even B however C if D although
- 4 came to Winterbourne about Daisy meeting with young Italian gentlemen.
 A Voices B Sayings C Words D Rumours
- 5 Winterbourne had a great relish for feminine beauty; he was addicted observing and analyzing it.
 A with B to C for D about
- 6 She talked to Winterbourne if she had known him a long time.
 A just B only C even D as
- 7 'She doesn't want to know me! Why don't you say so? You be afraid!'
 A don't need B don't have C needn't D don't
- 8 He been a little afraid that she would talk too much or too loudly.
 A hadn't B had C has D hasn't
- 9 'She sent me a message before her death saying she have appreciated my esteem.'
 A could B would C must D will
- 10 'It may be enchanting, dear child, but it is not the here.'
 A custom B done C nature D normal
- 11 'Randolph to learn some more. He's only nine. He's going to college.'
 A was B had C gets D ought