

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henry James was born in New York in 1843 into a wealthy, intellectual family. He was named after his father, Henry James Senior, who was a well-known theologian. When he was a child James travelled with his family back and forth between Europe and America, studying with tutors for the time he was abroad.

James loved reading and could read fluently in French, Italian and German as well as his native English. In 1864, he anonymously published his first short story, *A Tragedy of Error*, and from then on devoted himself completely to literature.



Throughout his career, he wrote extensively, publishing books and articles in a variety of genres: novels, short story collections, literary criticism, travel writing, biography and autobiography. In all, he wrote 22 novels, including two left unfinished at his death, and 112 stories, along with many plays and essays.

James moved to Europe, settling permanently in England in 1876. He lived there, first in London then in Rye, in Sussex. The outbreak of World War I was a profound shock for James, and in 1915, he became a British citizen to declare his loyalty to his adopted country as well as to protest against America's refusal to enter the war on behalf of Britain.

James died in London in 1916. He is considered by many writers and critics to be one of the greatest American authors and a number of his works have been made into successful films.

ABOUT THE Book

Daisy Miller was first published in the June and July 1878 issues of *Cornhill* magazine, in Britain. It was an immediate success and gained James a reputation as an international author. The story is based on a piece of gossip that James recorded in his notebook.

It tells the story of a pretty young American girl, the Daisy Miller of the title, who is travelling around Europe with her mother and younger brother. Daisy meets a compatriot, Winterbourne, who is fascinated by her open and friendly manner. However, Daisy's flirtatiousness is frowned upon by the other expatriates they meet and her lack of understanding of the unsaid rules of society ultimately leads to tragedy.




The novella explores a number of themes which James continued to explore in his later novels. It is one of his earliest treatments of the behavior of Americans abroad. In the years following the American Civil War a new business class emerged and they soon were eager to further their children's education by taking them on the 'grand tour' of Europe. James was drawn to the innocence and freshness of his compatriots while he also felt they were undereducated and provincial compared to their European counterparts.


It also takes a look at another theme which is central to his work: that of the choice not to live one's life to the full. Throughout James' stories characters realize that what they were waiting for has passed them by and that they have wasted their whole lives, or parts of their lives thinking about it.

In *Daisy Miller* Winterbourne spends the entire novel trying to figure out Daisy, without ever understanding her or what she means to him. Many critics consider *Daisy Miller* to be a preface to James' later novel *Portrait of a Lady*.

BEFORE READING


-  **1** Before you read the story, take a look at 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.
- ☐ **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.

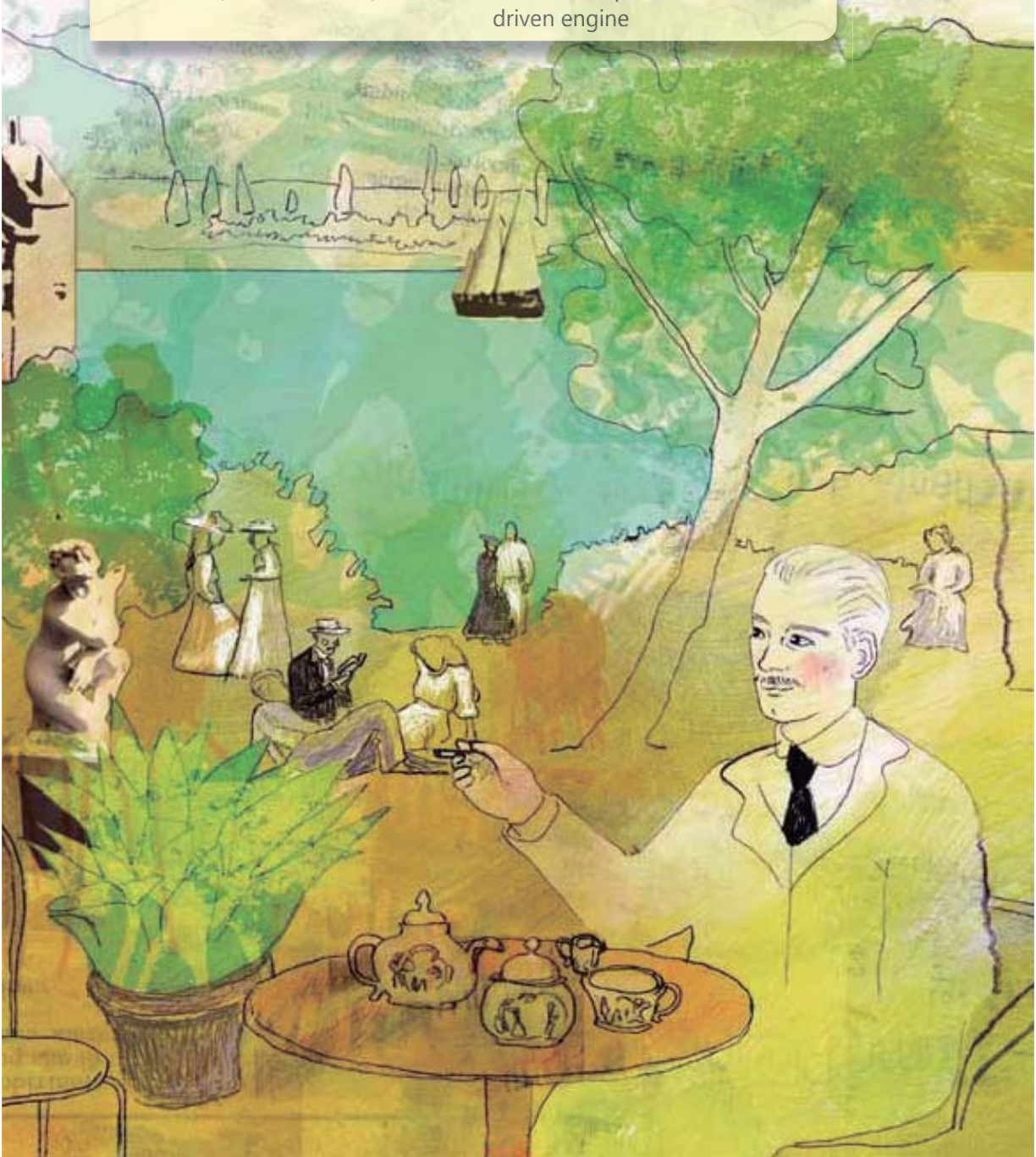
Share your ideas with the rest of the class.

-  **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.



- 1 **establishments:** (here) hotels
- 2 **distinguished:** (here) shown to be different
- 3 **flitting:** moving about quickly from place to place
- 4 **rustling:** sound that some materials (silk and muslin) make

- 5 **muslin:** thin, semi-transparent material used to make dresses
- 6 **high-pitched:** with a high and sharp tone
- 7 **inn:** guest house; place where you can sleep and eat
- 8 **steamer:** ship with a steam-driven engine





PART 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 establishments¹ of this type. One of the hotels, however, is famous, being distinguished² from many of its neighbors by an air both of luxury and of maturity. In this region, in the month of June, American travelers are extremely numerous. There is a flitting³ here and there of 'stylish' young girls, a rustling⁴ of muslin⁵ frills, a rattle of dance music in the morning hours, a sound of high-pitched⁶ voices at all times. You receive an impression of these things at the excellent inn⁷ 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 steamer⁸, 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.



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.

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 knickerbockers¹, with red stockings, which displayed² his poor little thin legs; he also wore a brilliant red cravat³.

He carried a long alpenstock⁴, the sharp point of which he thrust⁵ into everything that he approached—the flowerbeds, the garden benches, the trains⁶ of the ladies' dresses. In front of Winterbourne he paused, looking at him with a pair of bright, penetrating eyes.

1 **knickerbockers:** old-fashioned short trousers often worn by young boys

2 **displayed:** showed

3 **cravat:** informal neck-tie

4 **alpenstock:** a stick carried by mountain walkers