

### Discussion Questions, *Daisy Miller* and *Washington Square*

1. James's protagonists navigate foreign paths particularly in non-US countries, such as Daisy in "Daisy Miller," but also societies foreign to their own, such as Catherine in "Washington Square." What made a person American versus Continental in "Daisy Miller"? Is it different in 2026 than 1878?
2. Daisy Miller's name is meant to indicate plainness and simplicity, even innocence. Do you think Daisy was innocent as Giovanni states in the novel? Winterborne changes his mind and whether he even cares if she's innocent or not. Was this novella about Daisy Miller or a commentary on the male gaze? Compare that to Catherine Sloper's true innocence at the beginning of "Washington Square," which is peeled away later by later by both Dr. Sloper and Aunt Penniman.
3. Some critics claim "Daisy Miller" is anti-Pygmalion because James creates a modern woman and then kills her off, literally. Do you agree with this idea? Was Catherine a failed type of Pygmalion that her father, her Aunt, and Morris Townsend try to force into what they believed a perfect women should be, but were unsuccessful?
4. Both books are about young women of marriageable age, and of a large fortunes who don't fall neatly into their social circles' definitions of a proper young lady. What similarities do you see between Daisy and Catherine and what differences?
5. Daisy Miller was one of Henry James most popular novels during his lifetime, whereas Washington Square has eclipsed Daisy Miller in more recent years. Henry James, in fact, considered Washington Square rather poor other than Catherine the character. Do you agree with James' assessment? Do you have a preference for one story over the other?
6. Did Dr. Sloper know his daughter very well or doom his daughter to a lonely life when he said: "Lavinia will try and persuade her that some young man with a moustache is in love with her. It will be quite untrue; no young man, with a moustache or without, will ever be in love with Catherine." Is either book a modern fairy tale or morality play?
7. What is James' purpose in using words like stick regularly throughout "Washington Square?" Does any character in the novel get over anybody? In either book, can anyone find love and realize something positive out of it? Do any characters have free will?