

# *Daisy Miller*

## Henry James

### Suggested Discussion Questions

- ◆ In what ways does James use his “international theme” in this novel?
- ◆ What contrasts or oppositions does he draw between European and American characters and ideals? What rules are implied here for the behavior of young girls and married women in each culture?
- ◆ To what extent is Daisy responsible for her own fate, and to what extent is she an innocent crushed beneath a corrupt civilization? Discuss Daisy’s character in detail.
- ◆ Did you find her a sympathetic character or an irritating one?
- ◆ What points of European civilization does she fail to understand?
- ◆ In what way might it be said that this is Winterbourne’s story rather than Daisy’s? What do we learn about him in the course of the story?
- ◆ Is he responsible for her death? Look closely at the ways in which he assesses her and interprets—or misinterprets—her language and behavior.
- ◆ James uses places and place names carefully in this work. Discuss the significance of the various places alluded to here, such as the gardens, the Castle of Chillon, the Palace of the Caesars, the Colosseum, St. Peter’s, and so on.
- ◆ Two of the most crucial words in this story are “innocent” and “intimate,” especially because the characters define them in various ways and apply them to Daisy’s relations with others. Find the places in which these words are used and discuss the ways in which these loaded terms help to create tension (and misunderstandings) in the story.
- ◆ Several of the secondary characters play an important role in *Daisy Miller*, among them Randolph, Mr. Giovanelli, and three American ladies: Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Miller, and Mrs. Walker. Explain the function of each character in the story.
- ◆ The theme of illness is significant here; explain its function in the story.

