

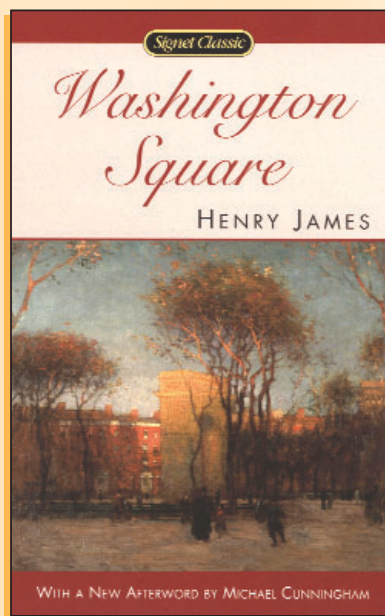
Signet Classics

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

HENRY JAMES'S

WASHINGTON SQUARE

By JAMES E. McGLINN & JEANNE M. McGLINN



S E R I E S E D I T O R S :

W. GEIGER ELLIS, Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, EMERITUS
and

ARTHEA J. S. REED, Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, RETIRED

ISBN: 0-451-52990-1

Copyright © 2004 by Penguin Group (USA)

For additional teacher's manuals, catalogs,
or descriptive brochures, please email
academic@penguin.com or write to:

PENGUIN GROUP (USA) INC.
Academic Marketing Department
375 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014-3657
www.penguin.com/academic

In Canada, write to:
PENGUIN GROUP CANADA
Academic Sales
10 Alcorn Avenue, Suite 300
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4V 3B2

Printed in the United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
LIST OF CHARACTERS	4
SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL	4
Family Background	4
First Meetings with Townsend.....	5
The Engagement	6
The Doctor's Counterattack.....	8
The Retreat of Morris	9
The Aftermath	9
PREREADING ACTIVITIES.....	11
I. Building Background Knowledge.....	11
Problem Situation	11
Anticipation Guide	12
Visualizing the Novel	12
Henry James's Biography.....	12
Reading the Language of the Novel.....	13
Studying Works of Art	13
II. Genre Study	13
Novel of Manners	13
Melodrama.....	14
Psychological Realism.....	14
III. Initial Exploration of Themes	15
Patriarchal Family / Authoritarian Father	15
Coming of Age: Obedience and Rebellion	16
Love and Marriage	17
Nature of Women and the Education of Women.....	17
DURING READING ACTIVITIES.....	18
I. Noting Initial Reactions.....	18
II. Reader Response.....	19
III. Focusing on the Elements of Fiction	21
Reading for Setting	21
Reading for Character	21
Reading for Theme	21
Reading for Genre.....	22
IV. Discussion Questions	22
V. Vocabulary Development.....	26
AFTER READING ACTIVITIES.....	27
Initial Reactions After Reading the Novel	27
Deepening Interpretation	27
Group and Individual Projects	28
READING OTHER LITERATURE CONNECTED TO THE THEMES	31
PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES	32
ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THIS GUIDE	32
ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE	32
SIGNETCLASSICS.COM	34
FREE TEACHER'S GUIDES	35

INTRODUCTION

Washington Square appeals to readers on many levels. Written by Henry James in 1880 and set in New York during the 1840s, it is a novel of manners that possesses the characteristics of psychological realism and melodrama. In exploring the manners and mores of the elite society of the age, James carefully examines his characters' thoughts and motivations while creating suspense through the precarious struggle between good and evil. Appropriate to the melodrama, the themes of the novel include coming of age, responding to an authoritarian father, and pursuing love and marriage. These are all subjects still timely for contemporary readers. James's writing style will challenge more able readers with its complex constructions and ironic tone, but at the same time, the narrative of events engages the general reader until the provocative ending.

Because of its relative brevity (considered by some as a novella), its rich use of language, its exemplification of a variety of genres, and its realistic exploration of human experience, *Washington Square* is uniquely appropriate for a high school English class. This guide aims to assist teachers in planning to teach the novel in ways that will make it accessible to the range of readers in contemporary classrooms. To this end there are suggestions for preparing students to read the novel with sensitivity to James's setting, themes, and writing style. During-reading activities are included that will facilitate students reading the novel actively with comprehension. The post-reading activities are aimed at encouraging a deeper exploration of the content of the novel and making connections with other literary works. The variety of activities presented here can be used selectively by teachers in addressing their goals for teaching the novel and responding to the needs of their students.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Dr. Austin Sloper, a physician in New York City, father of Catherine

Catherine Sloper, twenty-one year old daughter of the doctor during the main events of the novel

Mrs. Lavinia Penniman, sister of Dr. Sloper and aunt who lives in the household

Mrs. Elizabeth Almond, sister of Dr. Sloper, aunt of Catherine

Morris Townsend, suitor to Catherine

Mrs. Montgomery, sister of Morris Townsend

SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

FAMILY BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1

Austin Sloper is a distinguished physician in the city of New York in the mid-nineteenth century. At the time of the story he is about fifty years old, a widower with one living child, a daughter, named Catherine. His wife, an heiress with ten thousand dollars income, died in childbirth. A first child, a son, died at the age of three.

CHAPTER 2

Mrs. Penniman, Dr. Sloper's widowed sister, joined his household when Catherine was about ten years old. She became Catherine's companion and took charge of her training in the gentle arts expected of a young woman, such as piano playing and dancing. Mrs. Penniman is a helpless romantic, but Dr. Sloper predicts that this sensibility will not affect Catherine who is thoroughly unromantic.

Catherine is described as "plain, dull." She is good, but not clever and is content to take second place in social gatherings. She especially desires to please her father but has never succeeded because he regards her as a disappointment. The general assessment of Catherine is that she is too quiet and unresponsive. In reality she is painfully shy and in many ways, "the softest creature in the world."

CHAPTER 3

At twenty-one, Catherine enjoys indulging herself by choosing fashionable clothing that is too old for her and makes her look over-dressed. In particular she covets a red satin gown trimmed with gold fringe that she chooses to wear to an engagement party of one of her cousins, a daughter of Aunt Almond.

At this time, the family is living in Washington Square; Dr. Sloper had moved there from the center of New York about four years earlier to get away from the congestion of traffic and commerce in the city. Washington Square is "the ideal of quiet and of genteel retirement."

FIRST MEETINGS WITH TOWNSEND

CHAPTER 4

Catherine is introduced to Morris Townsend, a handsome and charming young man, who invites her to dance and then to sit and talk. He is very natural and puts her at ease. Later in the evening, she sees him visiting with her Aunt Penniman, and she is happy to think that her aunt obviously approves of Morris.

On the way home in the carriage, her father questions Mrs. Penniman about her conversation with Morris at the party. When they ask Catherine his name, she pretends she doesn't know. Catherine, who has always been absolutely honest, has told at least three half-truths this one evening.

CHAPTER 5

Morris Townsend calls at Washington Square, accompanied by his cousin who fills in a bit of his background. Morris has been away from New York City for a number of years, traveling around the world. He is very sociable and wants to meet people. He is very clever, but he currently has no employment.

After the men leave, Aunt Penniman tells Catherine that Morris is intent on courting her. Catherine is shocked and doesn't believe that it is possible.

CHAPTER 6

Morris visits by himself a few days later and asks Catherine about her interests and habits. Afterwards, when Catherine tells her father about the visit, he begins to make inquiries about Morris. He learns that Morris has a reputation for being wild and that he lives with a widowed sister, Mrs. Montgomery. The doctor decides to pay the sister a visit.

CHAPTER 7

Meanwhile Dr. Sloper invites Morris to dine with the family in order to judge him for himself. Sloper decides that Morris has ability and has turned out in a way that pleases the ladies, but he doesn't like him. Morris, sensing this judgment, tries to elicit some commitment from Catherine.

CHAPTER 8

Catherine continues to enjoy Morris's visits, the most important thing in her life. At the same time, she is quiet around her father who refuses to question her. Mrs. Penniman confirms that Morris is "greatly interested" in Catherine, and she is "very happy." Dr. Sloper suspects that Morris is a fortune hunter who has set out to prey upon "a weak-minded woman with a large fortune."

CHAPTER 9

About a week later, Catherine and Morris meet at a family gathering at Mrs. Almond's. Dr. Sloper decides to give Morris the benefit of the doubt and interview him again about his prospects for work. Morris, claiming to be insulted by Sloper's questions, urges Catherine to meet him away from the house. She refuses but indicates that she doesn't care what people think. Morris is happy about this declaration.

CHAPTER 10

When Morris visits Catherine the next day to declare his love, she says they must do their duty and speak to her father. Morris warns that her father will call him "mercenary" and makes her promise that she will be true to him.

THE ENGAGEMENT

CHAPTER 11

That evening Catherine announces to her father that she is engaged to Morris. Dr. Sloper doesn't approve, saying Morris is only interested in Catherine's money. Catherine defends him but receives no reassurances from her father.

CHAPTER 12

The next day Dr. Sloper questions Morris about the quickness with which he and Catherine have arrived at an understanding. Sloper does not approve of the engagement since Morris has no profession, resources, or prospects. Morris wonders if Sloper can be so sure that Catherine will give her father up, saying he too has a hold on her heart.

CHAPTER 13

Dr. Sloper decides to visit Morris's sister to make certain that his estimation of his character is correct. He believes Catherine will give up Morris because of her duty and loyalty to her father.

CHAPTER 14

Dr. Sloper visits Mrs. Montgomery, Morris's sister, at her modest and neat home to question her about her brother's character. Immediately he decides that she is a virtuous, hard-working, self-respecting person. He believes in his ability to make judgments based on observations. Mrs. Montgomery is reluctant to speak about her brother, but Sloper presses her to confirm his opinion of Morris as a selfish and shallow man. Mrs. Montgomery finally admits that she is supporting Morris financially and advises Sloper to protect Catherine from marrying her brother. Sloper is pleased that his suspicions are confirmed.

CHAPTER 15

At home Catherine does not betray her feelings outwardly, and her father is a bit disappointed that she doesn't show more resistance. Catherine is trying to "be good," hoping that her behavior will have a positive impact on her father, that somehow "heaven would invent some way of reconciling all things."

The romantic Mrs. Penniman believes Catherine should do something rash, like a secret marriage. Catherine continues to write to Morris who has been banished from visiting. Meanwhile, Mrs. Penniman meets him at a secret rendezvous in the city. Morris suppresses his resentment at her meddling and tries to remain civil.

CHAPTER 16

Mrs. Penniman advises Morris to elope with Catherine as the way to convince her brother that his intentions are not mercenary. Morris questions whether Catherine will be disinherited if she marries him, and says he doesn't want to cause her to be cut off from her father's money.

CHAPTER 17

When Catherine learns that her aunt has met with Morris, she becomes angry, fearing that her aunt's meddling will spoil things. But she does ask for details about where they met and what Morris said. Catherine asks her aunt not to meet secretly with Morris in the future.

CHAPTER 18

After her aunt retires, Catherine thinks for a long time about what she wants to do. Finally, late at night she goes to her father in his study to announce that she wants to meet with Morris one more time—not to break off the engagement as her father wishes but to ask him to wait. Sloper accuses her of cruelty and ingratitude and says he will never consent to the marriage. He will disinherit her if she marries without his consent. Catherine hopes for a change in her father but is unsure how this might come about. Sloper, a bit amused at Catherine's quiet determination, wonders how things will turn out.

CHAPTER 19

The next morning Sloper warns Mrs. Penniman not to intervene on Morris's behalf. Catherine had spent a difficult night, crying over her father's dismissal. But she rises as usual, determined to be as good as possible, hoping this will in some way change his mind.

CHAPTER 20

Morris demands a commitment from Catherine, saying she can't please both her father and him. He proposes they marry immediately just as Aunt Penniman has suggested. When Catherine relays the message from her father that he will disinherit her, she is so overcome by fear of the future that she agrees on the spot to marry Morris.

CHAPTER 21

Dr. Sloper announces to his sister, Mrs. Almond, that Catherine is going "to stick" with her young man in the hope that the couple can gain his consent to their marriage in time. He decides that he will take Catherine to Europe in an effort to make her forget Morris.

Mrs. Penniman requests another meeting with Morris to advise him to be patient. Morris is upset with her inconsistency. He tells Aunt Penniman that Catherine has consented to a private marriage, although he is vague about the date.

THE DOCTOR'S COUNTERATTACK

CHAPTER 22

Though Morris has convinced Catherine to marry, he cautiously tries to calculate gains or losses if he violates Dr. Sloper's wishes. Catherine feels she can no longer live in her father's house, since she has determined to go against him. She tells him about her decision to marry Morris. Her father acts as if this is a totally indifferent matter to him, but the next day he asks Catherine to postpone the marriage for six months so they can travel to Europe.

CHAPTER 23

Mrs. Penniman tells Catherine that Dr. Sloper hopes she will forget Morris while she is on a European tour. Catherine asks Morris what she should do, hoping he will tell her to stay at home. She thinks she is deceiving her father by going on the trip while knowing she will not change her mind. Morris advises her to go since it will be a sign that they are reasonable and willing to wait. Also she may be able to bring her father around when he sees that she is trying to be obedient and he is softened by the influence of beautiful scenery and art.

Dr. Sloper's grand tour of Europe extends from six to twelve months. At Washington Square, Mrs. Penniman entertains Morris who makes himself at home, enjoying the doctor's wine and cigars.

CHAPTER 24

For the first six months of their journey, Dr. Sloper does not speak to Catherine about Morris. He supposes they exchange letters but refuses to ask. For her part, Catherine feels absolved of blame since she has told her father that nothing will change her mind.

One evening near the end of the summer, Catherine and Sloper climb a remote footpath in the Alps. Suddenly Sloper asks his daughter, "Have you given him up?" When she answers no, he frightens Catherine with his anger and impatience. He also warns her that he is not a very good man, that he can be passionate and hard.

Sloper doesn't mention Morris again until the night before they are to return home. He asks when Catherine plans to marry and if she will at least notify him three days in advance.

THE RETREAT OF MORRIS

CHAPTER 25

When Catherine returns home, she learns to her dismay that her aunt has been entertaining Morris and allowing him the run of her father's study. Morris now has a position, a partnership with a merchant. But Catherine knows this will make no difference to her father who still disapproves of the marriage. She has accepted that she can never change his mind and has come home to be married.

CHAPTER 26

Morris and Catherine are reunited the next day. She is joyous that "this beautiful young man was her own exclusive property." Catherine believes her troubles are over, and she can marry Morris without hesitation. However, Morris argues that he doesn't want her to lose her inheritance or to suffer defeat. Catherine doesn't want him to try to persuade her father, since she now realizes that her father doesn't really love her. She knows that she isn't like her mother and that her father despises her for that. She accepts that she is totally separated from her father and will not ask anything of him, ever again.

CHAPTER 27

Dr. Sloper assures Aunt Penniman that neither he nor Catherine have changed an inch in their positions. He also realizes that Penniman has been entertaining Morris in his absence and warns her that Morris may exact a just revenge for her encouragement.

Sloper speaks to his other sister about his exasperation with Catherine's stubbornness. At first he had been curious to see if she would hold out against his pressure to drop her lover, but now he has grown tired of her obstinacy.

CHAPTER 28

Aunt Penniman writes to Morris warning him that nothing has changed and requesting "an interview," mainly to express her sympathy. Morris is convinced that Sloper will never give the couple a penny of his money, and he has decided that he must give Catherine up. He asks Mrs. Penniman to help him prepare Catherine for the news, using the excuse that he cannot come between Catherine and her father.

CHAPTER 29

Morris continues to visit the house on Washington Square but cannot bring himself to break the news to the trusting Catherine. Aunt Penniman realizes the magnitude of her responsibility in encouraging the young lovers. At each visit Morris tries to extricate himself from his promise to Catherine. He tries to provoke a quarrel by telling her he cannot visit due to business. Catherine is alarmed, asking what has happened, why has he changed. He refuses to say when he will return, promising to write a letter.

THE AFTERMATH

CHAPTER 30

Abandoned by Morris, Catherine gives way to tears of grief. She sees him in a new way, as if a mask had fallen from his face. He wanted to get away from her; he has been angry

and cruel. Catherine waits with the hope that he will return, but by the end of the evening she has given him up.

However, she doesn't want her father to know that anything has changed. She also asks a solicitous Mrs. Penniman to leave her alone. The next day when Morris doesn't appear, Catherine becomes more determined not to let her father see any sign of her suffering.

By the end of the week, Dr. Sloper suspects that Morris has backed out of the marriage. Catherine tries to maintain her routine, hoping for a word from her lover. When none comes, she seeks him in his lodgings, only to find out that he has left the city. She questions Aunt Penniman to see if she knows where Morris has gone. When her aunt talks about their need for separation, Catherine realizes how much her aunt has been interfering, and she becomes angry. Catherine also realizes that Morris had planned to break off the engagement with deliberation and that he has left her all alone.

CHAPTER 31

That evening Aunt Penniman discusses Catherine's unfortunate situation with her sister, Mrs. Almond, who feels sorry for Catherine and wishes Morris to be punished. Catherine pretends nothing has changed so as not to give her father the satisfaction of being right even after she receives a letter from Morris confirming their separation.

Dr. Sloper acts as if he is expecting Catherine to be married and demands to know when this will happen. To save face, Catherine declares that she has broken the engagement and sent Morris away from New York. The doctor takes revenge on Catherine by accusing her of having played with Morris's feelings only to drop him.

CHAPTER 32

This chapter summarizes what happens over the next twenty years. Morris does not return to New York, Catherine hides her broken heart, and Dr. Sloper never learns the truth about what happened. Mrs. Almond encourages him to have more sympathy for Catherine, but he thinks this is a silly idea since she was saved from a disagreeable fate. He also thinks that Catherine and Morris may actually have a plan to reunite after his death.

Catherine hears from Morris at several intervals, but she never writes to him. She refuses to marry anyone else. Catherine achieves a level of independence, living her life as she sees fit. She becomes a confidant of the younger set and a paragon of tradition. Privately, she knows that her life will never be the same due to the subterfuge of Morris and the harshness of her father. She is grateful that Mrs. Penniman, who seems to grow more girlish as she ages, never mentions Morris, although from time to time she suspects they write each other.

CHAPTER 33

More years pass and the doctor retires from his profession and goes on another European tour. One day, unexpectedly, he asks Catherine to promise that she will not marry Morris Townsend after his death. Catherine refuses, bruised by the memory of how he treated her all those years ago. She also wants to stand up for herself and not give in to his will.

Just as he had predicted, about a year later the doctor becomes ill and dies within three weeks. When his will is opened, it contains a recent codicil reducing his bequest to Catherine by 80 percent. This is the doctor's way of exerting his will that Catherine will not be attractive to fortune-hunters, a group he believes Catherine "persists in regarding as an interesting class."

CHAPTER 34

A year after Sloper's death, the ladies continue to reside in Washington Square. Mrs. Penniman enjoys a newfound sense of freedom from the control of her brother, and Catherine is happy with her living arrangements with her aunt. One evening in July, Aunt Penniman announces that she has seen Morris at their cousin's house and that he wishes to see Catherine. Catherine is shocked and breaks down crying.

CHAPTER 35

A week later Mrs. Penniman delivers a message from Morris that he wishes to see Catherine to justify his behavior. Just as Catherine says she wishes to be left alone, the bell rings announcing a visit from Morris.

When Catherine faces him, she finds he is no longer the slim, young man she remembered. He is deferential, but embarrassed, and Catherine does not put him at ease. She realizes that he "had made himself comfortable, and he had never been caught." She finds his presence painful. He hopes for continued friendship, but Catherine refuses, saying he treated her too badly and all her feelings are dead and buried.

As he leaves, Morris accuses Mrs. Penniman of an ill-conceived plan and swears he will never return. In the parlor, Catherine picks up her needlework and seats herself "for life, as it were."

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed to build students' background knowledge about the setting, 19th century American upper class society, genre and elements of fiction, and the themes of the novel. Choose the activities that best fit the themes you plan to teach or match your goals for students' learning. (Note: Consult other Teacher's Guides to Signet Classics; they contain ideas that can be adapted to your goals as you prepare students to understand and enjoy the novel.)

I. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

PROBLEM SITUATION

Have students read the scenario and write out their answers to the questions. Then have them share their answers with a partner and be prepared to discuss them with the class.

Catherine is a wealthy friend of yours. She is not very pretty, but she is a very nice person—simple and good. You can always count on her to be honest with you when you ask her opinion about choices you make in life. She is 21 and has rarely dated. Suddenly, a handsome, smooth-talking drifter comes into her life and proposes marriage. He sweeps Catherine off her feet. She wants to marry him even though her father has forbidden the marriage because he thinks the man is only after her money. You are concerned about your friend. When she tells you her dilemma, you see how sad she is. How do you advise her? What do you tell her father?

ANTICIPATION GUIDE

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Students should first answer the questions true or false under the Pre (pre-reading) heading. Then conduct a class survey to see how they answered and why. After reading the novel, have students indicate how the author would have answered the questions. Also, have them mark their own post-reading answers. Follow up with a class discussion to see if students changed their answers to any of the questions.

Pre Author Post

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| ___/___/___ | 1. Love is the main ingredient to a happy marriage. |
| ___/___/___ | 2. When choosing a spouse, it is important that he or she be at least as wealthy as you are. |
| ___/___/___ | 3. Parents know best when it comes to choosing a spouse for their child. |
| ___/___/___ | 4. It's important to choose a spouse who has a good job and who can provide for the family. |
| ___/___/___ | 5. It is better to have an unhappy marriage than not to marry at all. |
| ___/___/___ | 6. If a woman does not marry and have children, then she won't be fulfilled and happy. |
| ___/___/___ | 7. If a man does not marry and have children, then he won't be fulfilled and happy. |
| ___/___/___ | 8. If you do not have enough money to be able to live comfortably, then you won't have a happy life. |

VISUALIZING THE NOVEL

To enable students to visualize the events in the novel, have them look at the drawing entitled "The Passing Show" on the Web: <http://www.costumes.org/history/galleryimages/1898passingshow/pages/007.htm>

Ask students to discuss how the woman and man are dressed and coifed and to make inferences about their social status and their relationship.

Also, students could be visually primed for the irony in the novel by discussing an ironic cartoon such as one from an 1857 *Harper's Weekly* magazine: <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/1857rgcj.gif>

HENRY JAMES'S BIOGRAPHY

Context for reading the novel can also be gained by reading about Henry James's life. A factual and brief biographical sketch is on the Web at: <http://www.bartleby.com/65/ja/JamesHson.html>

An interesting biographical essay about Henry James giving details about his family and the injury that prevented him from fighting in the Civil War is at:

http://pages.emerson.edu/faculty/John_Anderson/e_james.htm

Students can be assigned to read these essays or to do an internet search on Henry James and report back to class interesting details about his life and his writing.

READING THE LANGUAGE OF THE NOVEL

Until students get caught up in the story of Catherine, her father, and her suitor, they may be put off by Henry James's writing style. The first paragraph of the novel with its complex sentences and abstract topic is especially difficult. The ambiguous referent in the first sentence makes it difficult to establish the period of the novel (the latter part of the first half of the 19th century, c. 1840). The rest of Chapter One is a little easier to understand because it introduces the tragedy in Dr. Sloper's life and ends with a suggestion that all is not well with Catherine.

One way of getting students launched in reading the novel is through a Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA). Read the first paragraph to the students and paraphrase it for them. Then ask them to generate predictions about the kind of person Dr. Sloper is. Ask students to read silently and to stop and look up at the end of each paragraph. Have them summarize the main points of what they read and confirm or revise their predictions until they reach the end of the chapter. Students can then be asked to make predictions about Catherine and her relationship to her father. They then read Chapter Two with a sense of context and purpose.

STUDYING WORKS OF ART

Mary Cassatt, an American Impressionistic painter of the 19th century, portrayed women in domestic settings engaged in various daily activities, such as reading or sewing. She often used members of her family as subjects of her paintings and so gives us a picture of the costumes of the day as well as typical activities for upper class women. Bring in poster-size examples of Cassatt's art or direct students to web sites of her art. One good site is the Web Museum at www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/cassatt/. If you use the web site, direct students to study the following paintings: *At the Theater*, *Woman Reading in a Garden*, *Femme Cousant*, *Woman in Black*, and *The Boating Party*. Ask students to describe concretely what they see and what the painting suggests about the lifestyle of affluent women in the 19th century.

Fernand Harvey Lungren is another artist who painted scenes of the daily activities of the upper class in New York City in the 19th century, including a painting entitled *Washington Square*. His paintings are a bit more difficult to locate; however, if you find his paintings in on-line web collections or in literature anthologies, use them just like Cassatt's paintings to make observations about the customs and lifestyle of the well-to-do and the roles of men and women.

II. GENRE STUDY

NOVEL OF MANNERS

James crafted the novel of manners, emphasizing the standards and behaviors of a particular group of people in a particular time and place. James's novels established a new direction for the American novel away from the romances of Cooper and Hawthorne, typically set in the past in a landscape of the mysterious forest with fantastic or imaginative actions. Most high school students already have a fairly wide acquaintance with realistic fiction, such as *The Outsiders*, *The Chocolate War*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *The Great Gatsby*. Ask them to brainstorm realistic novels they have read that present the look and feel of life as it is lived. Make a chart with the titles of three or four novels. Then fill in information to answer each of these questions: Where is the novel set? What

group of people does it represent? What conventions control the way these characters live? Discuss how these novels fit the definition of a realistic novel.

Ask students to role play how an author might write a novel of manners for a particular group of students at their high school in the present year. Brainstorm, as a class, the different groups making up the high school population. Assign small groups of students to brainstorm and list on chart paper the conventions of behavior for one group in their school. They should answer the following: How do these students act, dress, talk, and interact with others? What codes of behavior are expected of this particular group? What activities do they participate in? Each small group should report its observations and chart to the class.

For a creative writing activity, students can prepare a profile of a character they have identified in the small group exercise. This can be done by suggesting a name for the character, giving background information about the character's life, naming the character's friends, describing how they relate to their parents, and how the character might act in various situations. Students can read their profiles in small groups.

MELODRAMA

High school students are probably unfamiliar with the literary term *melodrama*. It comes from the Greek words, *melos* song and *drama* drama, and originally combined action with music and song. Modern melodramas have stereotypical characters, such as the villain, rake, virtuous hero, and innocent heroine; exaggerated actions that build suspense; sentimental and highly romanticized emotions; and sensational incidents. Since students are most familiar with the melodrama of television soap operas, ask them to name a few soap operas they know. Or, if they don't know any, use sitcoms instead. Choose one and outline together the main characters in the drama, and the most recent series of actions in the plot. Then ask students: What melodramatic type does each character represent? What emotion does the screen writer hope to create in the audience? Why do students enjoy/not enjoy these dramas?

List on a chart the types of characters they discover through their discussion of soap operas. They can refer to this as they begin to read *Washington Square*. Ask students to identify how the different characters and series of actions in the novel fit (or don't fit) the definition of melodrama.

PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM

James is considered one of the first modern novelists to explore the psychological dimensions of a character's actions and motivations. Thus it is important for students to understand that they come to know characters not only by what the characters say and do, or by what others say about them, but also by reading about and examining their inner thoughts.

To explore the depths of an action, show students Andrew Wyeth's painting, *Christina's World* (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/education/eu/christina.gif>). Ask students to give a concrete, physical description of what the character is doing within the setting. Then have them imagine what the girl is thinking. Do a free write, exposing the girl's inner thoughts. Have students share and compare their writings in small groups or with partners. As a class, discuss the various psychological interpretations students have deduced from the physical action and appearance of the character. Is one interpretation more valid than another? Why? What do these multiple interpretations tell us about human behaviors and appearances?

III. INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

Henry James explores multiple levels of meaning in his characters' actions and motives. At times he describes in great detail the subtle variations and changes in the character's mind; at other times we are left to make our own judgments. But it is clear that James wants us to get inside the characters' minds and to see the complexity of their choices and actions. Students can be prepared to read for these multiple levels of meaning by exploring several key themes before they read the novel. These explorations will create an atmosphere of questioning and seeking meaning that will encourage students to openly discuss their responses and attempts to develop understanding with each other.

PATRIARCHAL FAMILY / AUTHORITARIAN FATHER

1. In a patriarchal American family, the father rules. In order to contrast the modern notion of family versus the traditional, patriarchal family structure that underlays *Washington Square*, students can free write about the following question: How much obedience does a child owe to a father?

After students have written for five minutes, they should share their journals with a partner. Then as a class, students should analyze the varied responses to this question. What generalizations emerge? What limits have students set on the level of obedience a child owes to a father? Is it absolute? How is it limited? What do the students have to say about a child's personal life or preferences? What should prevail when a child's personal desires do not match a father's dictates?

2. Are contemporary American families typically patriarchal? Have students engage in a constructive controversy, arguing both sides of this question. Divide the class into groups of four. Within each group, assign pairs to discuss the con or pro side of this statement: "The father rules in the family today." After a mini-debate, have the pairs switch sides and argue the other side of the issue. Then have the groups share their ideas, pro and con, with the rest of the class. Finally, discuss evidence that shows that modern families are still patriarchal or more democratic or matriarchal.
3. In traditional patriarchal families, fathers control the important decisions in a child's life, particularly concerning marriage. While families in the U.S. typically do not arrange marriages, they still exert much control over whom their children marry. What are the signs of this control? Ask students to explore their own experiences for signs that their parents still exert control over marital decisions. For example, do any of the students know of instances in which the young man first asked permission from the father before proposing to his intended bride? Do they know of any instances in which the proposed marriage did not occur because of the opposition of the family? Do they know of instances in which the children totally disregarded family wishes? If so, what happened as a result?
4. The brief (four-page) short story, "The Use of Force," by William Carlos Williams explores the issues of authoritarianism in the relationship between a physician and his patient, a young child who may have the dangerous disease diphtheria. Have students read the short story and then discuss the following questions: What was the force that the doctor used? What was the medical reason for using the force? What became his personal motive in using force? What was the child's reaction? Is the physician right to impose his will over the child? What other methods could he have used to get the child to cooperate?

Analysis of this story could lead to a discussion of authoritarianism in other areas affecting students' lives. For example: Is the structure of their high school authoritarian or democratic? Why? What is gained/lost? What behaviors are expected of administrators, teachers, and students? Does authoritarianism erode the mutual respect that could exist among all parties?

COMING OF AGE: OBEDIENCE AND REBELLION

1. Traditional societies often had elaborate ceremonies to mark the passage from childhood to adult status in the community. Modern western society still retains some of the symbolism of coming of age in religious ceremonies such as Christian Confirmation or Jewish Bar Mitzvah (Bat Mitzvah), but today the passage from childhood to adulthood is usually marked by several separate events in which the child assumes more responsibility and independence. Ask students to list events that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood: first job, driver's license, sweet sixteen party, graduation, or religious ritual. Choose one of these events and ask students to brainstorm the behaviors that are typical before and after the event. How does a person change as a result of his/her new status?
2. The coming-of-age theme focuses on the growth of the adolescent from carefree childhood to responsible adulthood, usually emphasizing psychological growth. Young adults experience isolation, search for identity, confusion, and rebellion. They want to be independent at the same time that they are dependent on family for emotional and economic support. They want security, and they want to forge ahead into the unknown. They seek the support of their peer group while they also are individualistic, trying to discover who they are or what they are capable of achieving. There are three common stages in coming of age fiction:

Separation: The protagonist is separated both physically and emotionally from the love of friends and family through rebellion against expected norms or through independent choices.

Transition/Test: The protagonist undergoes a test of courage, character or stamina, either physical or psychological—an initiation.

Reuniting/Incorporation into the Adult Community: The protagonist is reunited with family and friends, is aware of having learned and grown from experiences, and is usually seen as a more mature person with increased status. This is also the culmination of the trial that is usually endured in either physical or emotional isolation.

Choose a novel or film most of your students know (*The Outsiders*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Star Wars*, a recent teen movie) and as a group list the stages and events in each stage that show what is happening to the main character. Discuss: Are rebellion and isolation necessary steps in the process of growth and maturation? List these stages on chart paper, so that while students are reading *Washington Square*, they can fill in details showing the stages of Catherine's coming of age.

3. One of the key motifs in coming of age fiction is that the hero/heroine through various, often jarring, experiences, moves from innocence to a more nuanced view of the world. Good and evil are no longer easily determined and motives are multifaceted. Have students free write: Agree or disagree? There is always a clear choice for right or wrong in situations dealing with others. Then have them share their writing with a partner and discuss as a class. Can someone do something right but for the wrong reasons and vice versa?

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

1. Bring in the marriage announcements section of the Sunday edition of several newspapers. Ask students to study several pages of these announcements, looking for what they reveal about the background of the couple, about their social and economic class, and their future. Discuss with students: Do the announcements generally show that people marry others with similar or different backgrounds?
2. Is it better to marry for love or money? Given the popularity of recent “reality” TV programs, such as *I Married a Millionaire* and *Bachelorette*, ask students to engage in a mini-debate on this question. List why a person should marry for love and why a person should marry for money. Then present and argue the positions.
3. Think about the phrases: love at first sight, falling in love, being swept off your feet, carried away by love. Have students describe what these phrases suggest about romantic love. Is love something a person chooses or is the person chosen by love?
4. Does romantic love last? Ask students to brainstorm the qualities of romantic love. Discuss: What sustains romance? Does marriage lend itself to romance? Why or why not?

NATURE OF WOMEN AND THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN

1. Questioning the patriarchal structure of the family may be controversial given the fundamentalist religious values that may be present in a classroom. Depending on your sense of your students' maturity, you may want to explore the roots of the notion that the father is the head of the family with absolute control over the actions of his wife and children. What is the biblical foundation of this idea? If students have read *The Koran* or the writings of Confucius, they may be able to describe the role of the father from these perspectives. How is the idea of patriarchy reinforced by U.S. laws? Do women have a legal identity separate from their husbands? Why is this important? How has patriarchy been attacked by feminists and why? What are the limits to the father's control of his family? Should there be limits?

This discussion could lead to a Web exploration of the women's movement in the nineteenth century. A useful place to start is a timeline of women's history and the women's movement in the U.S. at

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/vfwhtml/vfwtl.html>.

This site will lead to other biographical and historical web sites. Students should list five significant events in the struggle for women's rights in the nineteenth century.

Have students read the “Declaration of Sentiments,” by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, which is patterned after “The Declaration of Independence.” What are the accusations that the signers bring against the tyranny of men? List five rights that 19th century women said were denied to them. Why did the writer choose the format of Jefferson's document?

After the students have visited web sites and read and discussed the “Declaration of Sentiments,” discuss the status of women in the 19th century. List the rights women had in the following areas: marriage, divorce, voting, representation before the law, education, jobs, and status in religious assemblies.

Discuss: Has women's situation improved in the 21st century? Do women have equal rights before the law? Do women have equal opportunities in social, economic, legal, and family situations? In what areas are women still seeking rights?

2. Assign the short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, written in 1890. Often included in high school American literature anthologies, this story describes how an upper class woman is treated for a nervous condition. Discuss: What are the symptoms of the woman's condition? How does her husband who is a doctor diagnose her problem? How do expectations about her gender affect the diagnosis of her illness? Is the woman's condition exacerbated by the conditions of her life? What remedy does the doctor recommend? How does this "remedy" affect the woman? How would a modern physician diagnose this woman's condition? What therapy would be used today?

3. Have students search two web sites to understand the definition of coverture and women's rights under the law in the 19th century:

http://womenshistory.about.com/library/ency/blwh_coverture.htm

<http://members.aol.com/aacdrnnea/lawtime.htm>

Students can create a graphic organizer with "Coverture" in the center and elements of this legal definition as spokes coming out from the center. Discuss: How did the legal definition of coverture affect women in their daily lives?

4. Dr. Sloper has certain expectations about the abilities and potential of women. Ask students to brainstorm what are traditional notions or expectations about women in the family, school, and society. Discuss: Given these ideas about women's capabilities, how are women treated by their fathers and husbands? How are they treated in society? How are they treated by the law?

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

The reader response prompts and discussion questions that follow will elicit students' initial responses and lead to more in-depth analysis of the themes and ideas explored in the prereading activities. Other activities are designed to help students develop vocabulary and analyze the art of the novel.

I. NOTING INITIAL REACTIONS

1. Students can note their responses to the story in a double-entry journal for each section of the novel. Direct students to divide their paper in half with a vertical line. On one side they should write one or two quotes they find interesting. On the other side they answer these questions: Why did you choose the quotes? What do they mean? How do they add to your understanding of the characters or events?

Or students might create a dialogue journal they exchange with a classmate. After reading their partner's entry, students respond in writing in the margins of the journal. This initial sharing of reactions can be used as a review of the assigned reading or lead into the discussion for the day.

2. Have students create reenactments of key scenes from the novel using a creative drama activity: Slide Show. In small groups, students choose four key moments from a particular section of the novel. They plan a fixed tableau to present each moment in succession to the class. As they switch positions, they call out "switch," and the other

students close their eyes until the actors call out “open.” This happens four times in succession creating a visual “slide show.” The class can react to the presentation, suggesting why they believe the group chose the particular scene, or the group can give a brief explanation about why they presented a scene in a particular way. All members of the group must be a part of every scene, even if they act as an inanimate object. Give students time to plan and practice in order to make sure that the presentations “flow” smoothly. This is important in order to get the effect of the “slide show.”

II. READER RESPONSE

Give students an opportunity to express their initial reactions to the reading by asking open-ended questions or letting them choose a particular element of the story they wish to explore. Here are some possible prompts:

- Choose an event you reacted to strongly and tell why.
- Select a “striking quote” from the novel and write about your reaction to it.
- What was the most important word, phrase, or sentence in this section? Why was it the most important?
- Which character do you like in this section? Why?

Ask questions that require students to express an opinion supported with details from the story. Avoid response questions that can be answered in one word, such as “Did you like the story?” When the students say “No!” it’s difficult to engage them again. However, if you get the students to write their reactions, even when they are negative, they are engaged in critical analysis of the novel. After students have written their responses, they can share them in small groups or you can begin the discussion of the novel, using their responses as initiating ideas.

Another way to encourage reader response is to ask students to describe their responses to selected quotes from the novel. Have students use the quotes for free write, journal entry, or discussion starter. The following quotations may lead to rich responses:

1. “Two years later Mrs. Sloper gave birth to a second infant—an infant of a sex which rendered the poor child, to the doctor’s sense, an inadequate substitute for his lamented firstborn, of which he had promised himself to make an admirable man.” (8)
 2. Dr. Sloper’s “private opinion of the more complicated sex was not exalted. He regarded its complications as more curious than edifying, and he had an idea of the beauty of *reason*, which was, on the whole, meagerly gratified by what he observed in his female patients.” (11)
 3. Catherine “sought to be eloquent in her garments, and to make up for her diffidence of speech by a fine frankness of costume. But if she expressed herself in her clothes, it is certain that people were not to blame for not thinking her a witty person.” (17-18)
 4. “Catherine had never seen such features—so delicate, so chiseled and finished—among the young New Yorkers whom she passed in the streets and met at dancing parties. He was tall and slim, but he looked extremely strong. Catherine thought he looked like a statue. But a statue would not talk like that, and, above all, would not have eyes of so rare a color.” (25)
 5. “I should have liked you to say, ‘If my father doesn’t think well of you, what does it matter?’” (48)
-

6. "The sign of the type [of man] in question is the determination—sometimes terrible in its quiet intensity—to accept nothing of life but its pleasures, and to secure these pleasures chiefly by the aid of your complaisant sex. Young men of this class never do anything for themselves that they can get other people to do for them." (88)
 7. "The idea of a struggle with her father, of setting up her will against his own, was heavy on her soul.... It never entered into her mind to throw her lover off; but from the first she tried to assure herself that there would be a peaceful way out of their difficulty.... She only had an idea that if she should be very good, the situation would in some mysterious manner improve." (94)
 8. "...it is beyond question that by engaging yourself to Morris Townsend you simply wait for my death." (114)
 9. "Why, you must take me or leave me," said Morris, very reasonably. "You can't please your father and me both; you must choose between us." (124)
 10. "He had not forgotten that in any event Catherine had her own ten thousand a year; he had devoted an abundance of meditation to this circumstance. But with his fine parts he rated himself high, and he had a perfectly definite appreciation of his value, which seemed to him inadequately represented by the sum I have mentioned." (134)
 11. "I don't believe in lovely husbands," said Mrs. Almond. "I only believe in good ones." (144)
 12. "Nothing is changed—nothing but my feeling about Father. I don't mind nearly so much now. I have been as good as I could, but he doesn't care. Now I don't care either." (156)
 13. "It's because he is so fond of my mother, whom we lost so long ago. She was beautiful, and very, very brilliant; he is always thinking of her. I am not at all like her...it isn't my fault; but neither is it his fault." (161)
 14. "You can explain to her why it is. It's because I can't bring myself to step in between her and her father—to give him the pretext he grasps at so eagerly (it's a hideous sight!) for depriving her of her rights." (172)
 15. "... she felt a wound, even if he had not dealt it; it seemed to her that a mask had suddenly fallen from his face. He had wished to get away from her; he had been angry and cruel, and said strange things, with strange looks. She was smothered and stunned; she buried her head in the cushions, sobbing and talking to herself." (181)
 16. "From her own point of view the great facts of her career were that Morris Townsend had trifled with her affection, and that her father had broken its spring. Nothing could ever alter these facts; they were always there, like her name, her age, her plain face. Nothing could ever undo the wrong or cure the pain that Morris had inflicted on her, and nothing could ever make her feel toward her father as she felt in her younger years. There was something dead in her life, and her duty was to try and fill the void." (202)
 17. "She had been so humble in her youth that she could now afford to have a little pride, and there was something in this request, and in her father's thinking himself free to make it, that seemed an injury to her dignity." (205-206)
 18. "As Catherine looked at him, the story of his life defined itself in his eyes; he had made himself comfortable, and he had never been caught. But even while her
-

perception opened itself to this, she had no desire to catch him; his presence was painful to her, and she wished he would go.” (216)

III. FOCUSING ON THE ELEMENTS OF FICTION

READING FOR SETTING

The private drama that plays out among Catherine, her father, and her suitor takes place within the upper class society of New York in which certain rules and expectations control behavior. Ask students to look for clues to this social interaction as they read. How are persons expected to act? What are the customs by which young men meet eligible young women? How are households run? What are the rules of decorum?

Students can contrast the social norms of behavior in 19th century New York to the standards in their own communities. They can consider the issues of class and socio-economic status. Are socio-economic classes as rigidly divided today as they were in the world James created?

READING FOR CHARACTER

1. Assign one of the four main characters (Dr. Sloper, Catherine, Morris Townsend, and Aunt Penniman) to pairs of students, making sure each character is covered by one-fourth of the class. Have students prepare a graphic organizer on poster paper by putting the name of the character in the center. Then, as they read, students should look for details about the character, including physical descriptions, what is said about the character, how others respond to the character, what the character says and does. These details are noted on lines (spokes) coming out from the central circle. Post these charts around the classroom for reference during discussions. Also, point out the varied details noted by different pairs and discuss with the class how readers notice different details in a story and how this affects readers' responses to the story.
2. Focus on the depiction of women in the novel by comparing and contrasting the three female characters: Catherine, Aunt Penniman, and Aunt Almond. Have students create a three-column chart on which they list the behaviors of each of these women and quotes of what they say and what is said about them. Use these charts as a beginning point for a discussion of how the author wants us to feel about the women in the story. How does James show that women are constrained by social and gender roles? To what extent does he show sympathy with the characters?
3. Have students create a timeline of Catherine's awareness about herself, her father, her suitor, and the conflict she faces. Students should list her behaviors as they read the novel. Then using the stages of Coming of Age fiction, described earlier in this guide, students can examine how the behaviors of Catherine fit into each of these stages. Discuss: What are signs of her rebellion? What does she learn about her father? Herself? Morris? What awareness does she achieve? What kind of choices does she make for her future? In what ways does she act when she reenters the community?

READING FOR THEME

1. In prereading activities you may have developed students' background information about one or more of the main themes: patriarchy/ authoritarianism, coming of age, love and marriage, and the nature and education of women. Assign small groups of students to follow one of these themes. First, have each group prepare a

graphic organizer, listing their ideas about the meaning of the theme. Ask students to include at least three concrete examples of this theme from their experience. For example, the group explaining coming of age might describe rebellion, independence, maturity, or ability to deal with consequences. Groups should present their graphic organizers to the class.

Then, as students read the novel, each group should keep track of their particular theme by listing quotes or details related to the theme in a reading log. During class discussion of each chapter, these groups can serve as a resource for the quotes and ideas related to the theme. You can also call on group members to start the discussion of a particular theme by reading a quote they have recorded and explaining why they chose it.

2. Trace the courtship of Catherine throughout the story. Students can make a timeline listing the events. What are the stages that Catherine goes through in her relationship with Morris?
3. Have students brainstorm a list of Catherine's activities throughout the story. Periodically, examine this list to discuss her education and social expectations about the role of women. Discuss what changes, if any, would occur in Catherine's life if she married.

READING FOR GENRE

Without the psychological depth which James builds into this story, it could be easily viewed as melodrama, even a potboiler, with stereotypical characters and outcomes. If students have already talked about the elements of melodrama prior to reading the novel, you can ask them to identify character types, their characteristics, and their actions. This analysis can lead to discussion about how James goes beyond the conventions of melodrama and how he adds psychological depth to the novel.

IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Students' personal responses to the novel can deepen through small group and class discussion. The goal of discussion is to go beyond literal recall of the events of the plot and to make connections between what characters say and do and what it means in terms of theme.

As indicated in the Synopsis, the 35 chapters of the novel can be divided into six sections.

FAMILY BACKGROUND, CHAPTERS 1-3

CHAPTER 1

1. What were some of Dr. Sloper's accomplishments?
2. What were some benefits of Dr. Sloper's marriage to a wealthy woman?
3. What were Dr. Sloper's reactions to the death of his son and the birth of his daughter?

CHAPTER 2

4. How are Catherine's aunts (Mrs. Lavinia Penniman and Mrs. Almond) different from each other?
 5. What sort of girl is Catherine?
-

6. What is Dr. Sloper's opinion about women in general?
7. What is Dr. Sloper's prediction about how Lavinia will meddle in Catherine's romantic life? Why does he have this opinion?
8. How does Dr. Sloper deal with his disappointment in Catherine? Are there any hints that Dr. Sloper's opinion of his daughter underestimates her true character?

CHAPTER 3

9. How does Catherine express herself in her clothes?

FIRST MEETINGS WITH MR. TOWNSEND, CHAPTERS 4-10

CHAPTER 4

1. What are Catherine's first impressions of Mr. Townsend?
2. What are your first impressions of Mr. Townsend? Do you see any hint that cousin Marian's view of him as conceited is justified?
3. The narrator says that Dr. Sloper chiefly uses irony in his conversations with Catherine. Cite some examples of this? Why do you think he talks to her this way?

CHAPTER 5

4. How does Morris treat Catherine in his first visit to the house? Why does he act in this manner?
5. What role is Aunt Lavinia playing in the courtship? Why does she play this role?

CHAPTER 6

6. How does Dr. Sloper's view of Catherine differ from that of Mrs. Almond?

CHAPTER 7

7. Why does Dr. Sloper form a negative view of Mr. Townsend? Do you think that he is jumping to conclusions? Why or why not?
8. Why does Catherine care so much about what her father thinks of Mr. Townsend?

CHAPTER 8

9. Why doesn't Dr. Sloper step in and forbid Catherine from seeing Mr. Townsend?

CHAPTER 9

10. Does Mr. Townsend act impudently in his conversation with Dr. Sloper? What is the double meaning in Mr. Townsend's remarks that Dr. Sloper senses?
11. Why do you think that Catherine refuses to meet Mr. Townsend in the Square, but asks him to see her at her home?

CHAPTER 10

12. When Morris visits Catherine at her home, what does he tell her, and how do they act together? To what extent do you feel that the couple is actually in love?
-

13. Why does Morris ask Catherine to tell her father that they intend to marry instead of taking on the task himself? To what extent do you think he is justified in this?

THE ENGAGEMENT, CHAPTER 11-21

CHAPTER 11

1. Why does Catherine expect her father not to be cruel to her in dealing with her relationship with Morris?

CHAPTERS 12 AND 13

2. Why does Dr. Sloper think Morris would make a good companion but a poor son-in-law?

CHAPTER 14

3. How does Dr. Sloper manage to get what he wants in his conversation with Morris's sister, Mrs. Montgomery?
4. How does Dr. Sloper reveal his opinion of the weak nature of women? How justified is his concern?

CHAPTER 15

5. How does Catherine plan to resist her father's refusal to accept Morris? Would you choose the same if you were in her place?

CHAPTERS 16 AND 17

6. What motivates Mrs. Penniman to attempt to advise Morris and Catherine?

CHAPTER 18

7. How does Dr. Sloper play on Catherine's affection for him in trying to persuade her?
8. Why does Dr. Sloper seem entertained by Catherine's resistance?

CHAPTER 19

9. Why does Catherine feel that she is bad even though her heart is breaking? Do you agree that she is acting in a "bad" manner? How do you define "bad behavior" in this sense?

CHAPTER 20

10. What moves Catherine to agree to marry Morris?
11. What does Morris do when Catherine tells him she will marry him as soon as he wishes? How do you interpret his response?

CHAPTER 21

12. What do you think of Mrs. Penniman's accusation that Dr. Sloper is cold-blooded?
-

THE DOCTOR'S COUNTERATTACK, CHAPTERS 22-24

CHAPTER 22

1. Why does Morris delay marrying Catherine?
2. Catherine feels that she shouldn't live under her father's roof if she doesn't obey him. Do you think this is an appropriate attitude for a daughter to have?

CHAPTER 23

3. Do you agree with Mrs. Almond's opinion about what will happen if Morris marries Catherine? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 24

4. How does Dr. Sloper get tough with Catherine in trying to dissuade her from marrying Morris? How justified is he in his methods?

THE RETREAT OF MORRIS, CHAPTERS 25-29

CHAPTER 25

1. How has Catherine's feeling for her father changed? What do you think has changed her? How would you feel in her situation?

CHAPTER 26

2. What convinces Catherine that her father does not love her? How accurate is her perception about her father?

CHAPTER 27

3. How does Dr. Sloper reveal that he is not moved by Catherine's suffering?

CHAPTER 28

4. What does Morris reveal about his feelings about Catherine? How much does he love her?
5. Has Morris only been interested in her money all along? Has her father been right in trying to prevent Catherine from marrying him? Has Catherine been right in trying to resist her father?

CHAPTER 29

6. How does Catherine feel when Morris leaves her?

THE AFTERMATH, CHAPTERS 30-35

CHAPTER 30

1. Why is Dr. Sloper pleased about Catherine's loss of her fiancé? What does this say about his character?
-

CHAPTER 31

2. Why does Catherine try to conceal her feelings from her father?

CHAPTER 32

3. What does Dr. Sloper suspect about Catherine and Morris? Do you think he understands his daughter? Why or why not?
4. How do you feel about Catherine's refusal of other suitors?

CHAPTER 33

5. Why does Catherine refuse to tell her father she will never marry Morris?

CHAPTERS 34 AND 35

6. Why does Catherine not want to see Morris anymore?
7. What is Morris's response to Catherine's rejection of him? What does this say about his reason for returning to her?

V. VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Even sophisticated readers are challenged by James's vocabulary and syntax. Use the DR-TA (Directed Reading-Thinking Activity) strategy described earlier in this guide to help students read the first chapters of the novel. Once students are engaged in the story of Catherine's courtship and rebellion against her father, the plot should help carry them along. However, they will encounter many unfamiliar words throughout the novel. Tell students that while they will be challenged, maybe even frustrated by James's language, one of the advantages of reading James is that they will learn the meaning of words in context and become more confident in their ability to read complex language. Also, remind them they do not have to know the meaning of every word to understand what is happening in the story. Often the context will give them a fairly accurate idea of the meaning of the words.

1. VOCABULARY JOURNAL

Students can keep a vocabulary journal as they read the novel. Have them collect three to five unfamiliar words each day from the novel. They should copy the sentence or clause with the embedded word. After looking up the word in a dictionary, they should provide a brief definition or synonym of the word fitting its context. Every fifth day, students can pair up and teach each other five words to be added to the other's list.

To provide accountability, circulate among the students and give them credit for completed work while they are teaching each other their words.

2. VOCABULARY SELF-COLLECTION STRATEGY

After reading and discussing a section of the novel, have students in teams of two or three identify a word they think is important to understanding the section. Selected groups can be called on to present their word to the class by reading a part of the section containing the word, giving their team's definition of the word, and explaining why they think the class should learn the word. You can teach the strategy by first modeling it for students (Vacca & Vacca, 2002, pp. 373, 377).

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

After reading the novel, students are ready to discuss the themes in greater depth and to engage in activities that will deepen their interpretation, help them see connections between the novel and other literature and media, and provide a creative outlet.

INITIAL REACTIONS AFTER READING THE NOVEL

Using some of the lists, charts, and a timeline of the plot that students generated during the reading of the novel, begin by asking them general reactions to the plot, characters, and themes.

1. Review the ways that Dr. Sloper has tried to prevent Catherine's marriage to Morris. What effect has he had on Catherine? Was he right to oppose the marriage?
2. Is Dr. Sloper right to disinherit his daughter in the end? What motivates him to make this decision?
3. Is it right to judge a marriageable suitor on his wealth or ability to get a good job? What other considerations should be considered? Is Catherine right to choose Morris? Why?
4. How has Catherine changed throughout the novel? Has she changed in her awareness about obedience to her father, about love and marriage, about herself? Has her development been positive?
5. Is Catherine's ultimate choice, to live as an unmarried woman, good or bad for her?
6. Was Mrs. Penniman a detriment or a support to Catherine? How do you judge her character?
7. What is your opinion of Morris? Was he ever sincere in his bid for Catherine's hand? Do you agree with Catherine's judgment of him in the end? Do you think he suffered at all? How?

DEEPENING INTERPRETATION

The following topics and questions build on students' initial reactions and lead them back to the novel to make connections and to analyze more deeply. These questions can be used for whole class and small group discussion or as essay topics.

1. Dr. Sloper believes in his rights as patriarch of his family. One justification for a patriarchal system is that the father has the highest level of ability, knowledge, and wisdom and therefore is the best one to rule. Evaluate Dr. Sloper's record as a patriarch. To what extent does he demonstrate that he has the ability and wisdom to effectively guide his family?
 2. The novel delineates a series of norms and codes of behavior that control courtship leading to marriage among the members of the community. Describe this code of behavior. What principles does it follow? In what ways is this code positive or negative?
 3. Is rebellion a necessary part of coming of age? Is it positive that Catherine rebels against the wishes of her father? Is Catherine a stronger person by the end of the novel? Explain why her actions are positive or negative.
 4. Dr. Sloper doesn't have a high opinion of most women because he finds them unreasonable. To what extent is he justified in his point of view? Consider the
-

education and occupations of women as described in the novel. Are they prepared for a life of the mind and action or are they unprepared, as the doctor says, to make reasonable choices? Who is to blame for their condition—the women, their parents, or the social constraints of the time?

5. Compare and contrast the male and female characters in the novel. What are the general characteristics or qualities of men and women? In what ways are they admirable and capable or the opposite? In the end do you think James's sympathies lie more with the male or female characters and why?
6. James depicts a variety of married relationships in this novel—those of Dr. Sloper, Mrs. Penniman, Mrs. Almond, and Catherine's cousin Marian. He also gives us a view of Catherine's life if she did marry Morris. According to James, what are the ingredients of a good marriage? Does he believe that romantic love is an important component of marriage? Does he suggest that a person can be happy and fulfilled yet unmarried?

GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

The projects described here are designed to deepen students' initial responses and develop their understanding of the novel and issues generated by reading the novel. Some may be assigned for individual work; others are group projects. Choose among these suggested activities according to your assessment of your students' needs and abilities. Adapt these activities as needed given your goals.

1. Have students explore topics and themes in the novel through a Web-based activity.
 - a. Students can brainstorm individually or as a group about what they have learned on such topics as: the Victorian Age in America, Victorian social customs and fashions, Victorian families, and the role of women in 19th century American society.
 - b. Students should list questions they have about any of these topics and display them on the board for the whole class to review.
 - c. Assign students to work in pairs on questions of interest to them. Give them time to conduct an internet search on these topics. They should prepare a brief class presentation of their findings along with answers to the specific questions.
 2. The physical setting of the novel, Sloper's home at Washington Square, epitomizes the values of the society the novel explores through its location, seclusion, and quality. In this creative writing project students should choose a place that serves as a metaphor for a particular set of values. First they should brainstorm the values, relationships, and norms of behavior that relate to this place. Then, using the novel as a model, students can write their own short story describing this particular place, showing how persons in this place interact according to a particular set of values and norms.
 3. Could this story of Catherine, her father, and suitor lend itself to serving as a moral example for other young women? Have students write a moral for the novel on a large index card. In small groups, they can share their "morals" and discuss why or how they arrived at this statement of the main idea of the novel. After hearing these explanations, each group can choose the moral that best represents James's purpose in writing the novel.
-

4. More advanced students can benefit from exploring critical reactions to *Washington Square* and other James's novels. Students can begin their exploration by reading the "Afterword" by Michael Cunningham in the Signet Classics edition. Cunningham comments on the novel and James's reputation as a novelist. Ask students to summarize Cunningham's views about the novel's strengths and determine if they are supported in other critical commentary. In addition to critical collections that may be in the school library, there is a collection of criticism about James's work at the Internet Public Library, Online Literary Criticism Collection, Henry James, Jr. (1843 - 1916) <http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/bin/litcrit.out.pl?au=jam-63#crit>
 5. Is *Washington Square* a melodrama or masterpiece? Students can use the on-line collection of James's criticism, listed above, and their own reading of the novel to make a case for *Washington Square* as a classic beyond the label of melodrama. What are the enduring elements of this novel? What makes this novel a classic future generations of students should continue to read?
 6. Students can create a "found poem" using lines and phrases from the novel that resonate about its ideas and themes. They go through the novel underlining words, phrases, and sentences or write out a list of lines. Then they organize the lines into a free verse poem and write a final copy of the poem. Students share poems in small groups, or they mount their poems on construction-paper and post in the classroom.
 7. Students can create a dramatic presentation to show the two sides of the struggle that takes place within Catherine to be both an obedient daughter as well as a true lover to Morris. One way to do this is to have small groups of students skim the novel looking for sections where Catherine or the narrator describes this struggle. One group looks for passages showing how she is trying to be obedient and respectful to her father; the other group looks for passages in which she describes her loyalty to Morris. Groups can use these lines to create a speech Catherine might give showing her allegiance to one side. Then the speeches can be presented in counterpoint.
 8. Dramatize Catherine's reaction on the night that Morris leaves her. Have students creatively show the various ideas that whirl through Catherine's mind as she tries to justify, analyze, and deal with her lover's desertion.
 9. Ask students to create a diary entry for the night that Catherine realizes Morris is untrue. Describe her reactions, how she wants to act with her father, what she has learned, and how she plans to deal with her new knowledge.
 10. Students can create dramatic monologues, using lines from the novel, from the point of view of Morris and Dr. Sloper. First review with students several famous dramatic monologues, such as Hamlet's speech "To be or not to be" or Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess." Then once students choose the character they wish to explore, they can skim the ending of the novel to find passages that indicate the character's reactions and state of mind. Using some of these lines and their sense of what the character might reveal about themselves and their motives, students can write and then present their dramatic monologues.
 11. The final scene of the novel shows Catherine sitting in the parlor picking up her sewing as her ex-lover mutters "Damnation!" and strides off for good. The reader may be left wondering about Catherine's limited future. Ask students to rewrite the ending of the novel in a way that changes Catherine's fate. They should try to be as realistic as possible, but feel free to change the basic depictions of Catherine and Morris.
-

12. The breakup of the engagement of the daughter of such a prominent person as Dr. Sloper would have caused a stir in the tight circles of New York's aristocratic society. Have students write a gossip column describing the circumstances of the engagement and why it was broken.
13. There are two movie versions of *Washington Square*, *The Heiress* (1949) and *Washington Square* (1997). *The Heiress* stars Olivia de Havilland who won an Academy Award for best actress in her role as Catherine. Montgomery Clift stars as Morris Townsend. In *Washington Square*, Jennifer Jason Leigh stars as Catherine, Ben Chaplin as Morris, Albert Finney as Dr. Sloper, and Maggie Smith as Catherine's Aunt Lavinia. Although the 1949 movie is generally out of print, the 1997 film can still be obtained at video outlets. The movie trailer for *Washington Square* can be accessed as a QuickTime clip at: <http://www.comingsoon.net/movies/w/washingtonsquare.php>
The movie is rated PG (for thematic elements, mild language, and a child-birth scene) and it sticks fairly closely to the themes of James's story. It can be shown in parts, at various points as students read the novel, or all at once following the reading of the novel. Students can be directed to write in their journals about the similarities and differences between their understanding and images of the characters in the novel and the film. In case there is not time to view the film, photos from the film can be accessed at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120481/photogallery>
Students can discuss the photos as they recap the plot of the novel or print and use them in a character collage that gives brief descriptions of the role of each character.
14. In addition to the film versions of *Washington Square*, there are several other films relating to Victorian life and culture. Assign students to view one of these films and write a comparison and contrast between the treatment of the themes of the novel *Washington Square* and their treatment in the chosen film. Relevant films that can be accessed in video outlet stores include the following:

BASED ON THE NOVELS OF HENRY JAMES:

The Wings of the Dove (1997), directed by Iain Softley, starring Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache.

The Portrait of a Lady (1996), directed by Jane Campion, starring Nicole Kidman, John Malkovich.

BASED ON THE NOVELS OF EDITH WHARTON:

The Age of Innocence (1993), directed by Martin Scorsese, starring Daniel Day-Lewis, Michelle Pfeiffer, Winona Ryder.

The House of Mirth (2000), directed by Terence Davies, starring Gillian Anderson, Dan Aykroyd.

BASED ON THE NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN:

Emma (1996), directed by Douglas McGrath, starring Gwyneth Paltrow, James Cosmo.

Sense and Sensibility (1995), directed by Ang Lee, starring Kate Winslett, Emma Thompson, Hugh Grant.

Pride and Prejudice (1995), directed by Simon Langton, starring Jennifer Ehle, Colin Firth.

Persuasion (1995), directed by Roger Michell, starring Amanda Root, Ciaran Hinds.

READING OTHER LITERATURE CONNECTED TO THE THEMES

Read another novel of manners that shows how the values of society affect the main character and how the author judges society as responsible for what happens to the protagonist. How is society a positive or negative influence? Does the character turn away from society or find a way to live an individual life within its structures? Make a list comparing and contrasting Catherine Sloper and the main character in one of the following novels:

The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton

House of Mirth by Edith Wharton

The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James

Awakening by Kate Chopin

LITERATURE CIRCLES

Book Clubs or Literature Circles can be created for a period of two to four weeks for students to engage in reading, responding to, and discussing self-selected novels from the list above. Book Clubs are designed to give students:

- the opportunity to choose a work of literature they want to read
- control over the pace of the reading
- opportunities to respond to a novel and discuss it in detail
- choices for how they will contribute to the discussion
- opportunity to develop vocabulary and skills of literary analysis
- time to develop independent thinking
- time to engage in creative group projects

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

1. CHOOSE A BOOK

You will have an opportunity to survey each of the books using a “Book Pass-Around” strategy. When you get the novel, look it over and read several pages. After you have reviewed each novel, list your first and second choice. Groups will be set up according to your choices. Most of you will get your first choice, but we may have to even out the groups given the available copies of each novel.

2. PLAN THE READING

When the group meets for the first time, decide how members want to read the novel (independently, in pairs, groups, silently, aloud) and the pace of the reading (how many chapters per day). Your teacher will give you a deadline for completion of the novel and the projects designed to extend your background knowledge and show your responses to the reading.

3. CHOOSE ROLES

In *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*, Harvey Daniels gives the following titles to the roles of group members: Discussion Director (develops questions for the group discussion), Vocabulary Enricher (chooses several important words in the reading that may be new or puzzling), Literary Luminary (chooses several

key quotes from the novel to read aloud to the group), Connector (makes connections between students' experiences and the novel), Summarizer (prepares a brief summary of the day's reading), Illustrator (draws a picture related to the reading), Travel Tracer (describes where the action takes place), and Investigator (looks up background information on any topic related to the book). Since most groups will be no larger than five students, some of the roles, suggested by these labels, can be combined. The teacher will explain the role of each group member. Your group will be counting on you to accomplish your part of the whole group's effort.

4. GOALS

During each group meeting, students need to accomplish the following:

- A. Discuss the reading thoroughly, using questions prepared by group members.
- B. Work on vocabulary.
- C. Work on a creative project (usually assigned by the teacher; see suggestions in After Reading Activities).

5. EVALUATE

As a group, assess the work of the group at the end of the Book Club. How effectively did group members work together? Did you keep to your schedule? What can you do to improve the quality of your reading circle?

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Daniels, Harvey. *Literature Circles. Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 1994.

Teacher's Guides to Signet Classics Editions on the Web:
<http://us.penguinroup.com/academic>

Vacca, Richard T. and Jo Anne L. Vacca. *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THIS GUIDE

JAMES E. McGLINN, Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, teaches methods of teaching and reading courses. He has taught high school English, and his research interests currently focus on motivating and increasing the reading achievement of students in middle and high school.

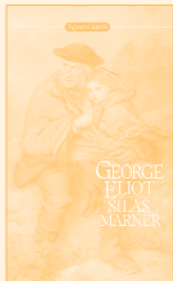
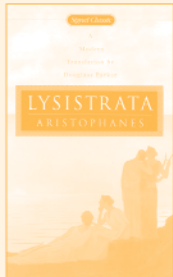
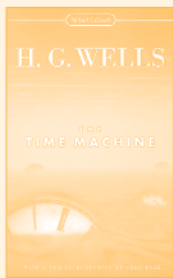
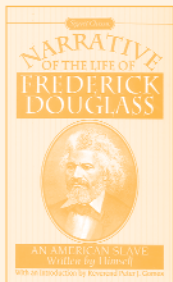
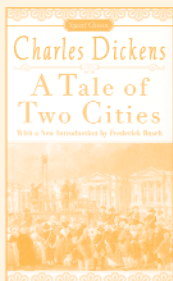
JEANNE M. McGLINN, Director of Humanities and Associate Professor in the Department of Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, teaches Children's and Adolescent Literature and directs the field experiences of 9-12 English licensure candidates. She is the coordinator of the Classroom Materials column of the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, published by IRA. She has written a critical book on the historical fiction of adolescent writer Ann Rinaldi for the Scarecrow Press Young Adult Writers series.

ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE

W. GEIGER ELLIS, Professor Emeritus, University of Georgia, received his A.B. and M.Ed. degrees from the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) and his Ed.D. from the University of Virginia. His teaching focused on adolescent literature, having introduced the first courses on the subject at both the University of Virginia and the University of Georgia. He developed and edited *The ALAN Review*.

ARTHEA (CHARLIE) REED, PH.D. is currently a long-term care specialist with Northwestern Mutual Financial Network and senior partner of Long-Term Care and Associates. From 1978 to 1996 she was a professor of education and chairperson of the Education Department at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. She is the author or co-author of 15 books in the fields of adolescent literature, foundations of education, and methods of teaching. She was the editor of *The ALAN Review* for six years and president of the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English (ALAN). She is currently co-authoring the 5th edition of *A Guide to Observation, Participation, and Reflection in the Classroom* (McGraw-Hill 2004). She has taught almost every grade from second grade through doctoral candidates. She lives in Asheville, North Carolina with her husband Don, two dogs, and a cat.

NOTES



click ON A classic

www.signetclassics.com

The Signet Classics Web site includes:

- New features such as samplers from forthcoming publications, audio and video downloads, and hundreds of contextual essays from renowned authors
- New monthly newsletters for consumers and booksellers, with details on current and upcoming publications
- Academic Services, with Penguin's unique interactive College Faculty Information Service, convention schedules, desk copy ordering, and Teachers Guides, offers professors and students the definitive classics experience

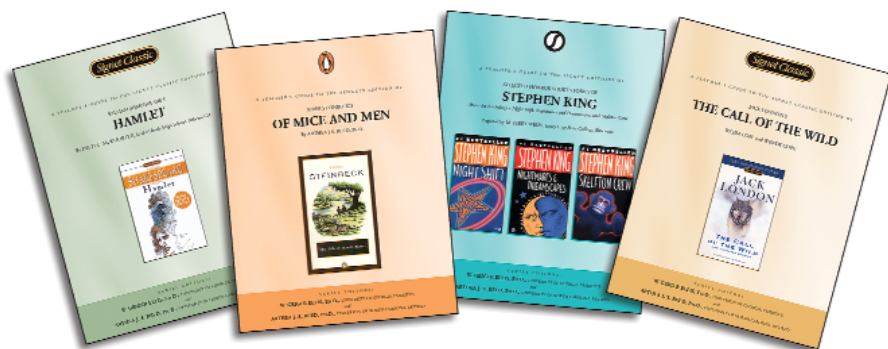
Other site features include:

- Information on all Signet Classics titles and authors
- Downloadable and printable catalogs
- Ongoing contests and giveaways of posters, books, and mousepads
- The definitive history of Signet Classics
- The popular global discussion board
- Powerful advanced search and browse functions by author, subject, and era
- Interactive quizzes, games, and crossword puzzles

FREE TEACHER'S GUIDES

A full list of *Teacher's Guides* and *Teacher's Guides for the Signet Classic Shakespeare Series* is available on Penguin's website at:

www.penguin.com/academic



TEACHER'S GUIDES

Animal Farm • Anthem • Beloved • Beowulf • The Call of the Wild • Cannery Row • City of God • The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories • The Crucible • Death of a Salesman • Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde • Dubliners • Ethan Frome • The Fountainhead • Girl in Hyacinth Blue • The Grapes of Wrath • Great Expectations • A Journey to the Center of the Earth • The Jungle • The Life of Ivan Denisovich • Looking Backward • Lysistrata • Main Street • Of Mice and Men • The Mousetrap and Other Plays • A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave • Nectar in a Sieve • 1984 • The Odyssey • The Passion of Artemisia • The Pearl • Persuasion • The Prince and the Pauper • A Raisin in the Sun • The Red Pony • Redwall • The Scarlet Letter • The Scarlet Pimpernel • Silas Marner • A Streetcar Named Desire • A Tale of Two Cities • The Time Machine • Up from Slavery • Washington Square • The Women of Brewster Place • Wuthering Heights

TEACHER'S GUIDES FOR THE SIGNET CLASSIC SHAKESPEARE SERIES

Antony and Cleopatra • As You Like It • Hamlet • Henry V • Julius Caesar • King Lear • Macbeth • Measure for Measure • A Midsummer Night's Dream • Much Ado About Nothing • Othello • Richard III • Romeo and Juliet • The Taming of the Shrew • The Tempest • Twelfth Night

PENGUIN GROUP (USA) INC.
Academic Marketing Department
375 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014-3657

**Visit the Penguin Group (USA)
web site at www.signetclassics.com
to browse all Signet Classic
paperback editions and
<http://us.penguingroup.com/scessay>
for information about the Annual
Signet Classic Scholarship Essay Contest**

