

From the new Postscript to Henry James's *Daisy Miller* & *Four Meetings*:

In the fall of 1877, then 34-year-old Henry entrusted the short story "Four Meetings" to the American magazine Scribner's Monthly. The following spring, the novella-like "Daisy Miller" bloomed in the field of his imagination. First published in London's Cornhill Magazine, this story seized the attention of readers on both sides of the Atlantic, giving rise to the popular conception of the 'American girl.'

For conversation or contemplation:

1. Henry James originally titled his novella, *Daisy Miller: A Study*—what if it were titled *Frederick Winterbourne: A Study*? Does the reader learn more about the title character or the young gentleman through whose eyes we are ostensibly seeing her?
2. What does Frederick Winterbourne want from Daisy Miller? What does she want from him? Do either's intentions change across the time period described by the story?
3. To what extent is James writing about social class or about cultural differences? In *Daisy Miller*, we meet a handful of Americans (the Millers; Winterbourne; his aunt, Mrs. Costello; his friend, Mrs. Walker; etc.) who interact with one another, but do they belong to the same group(s)? What draws them together? What divides them?
4. Flirting takes on an outsized importance in *Daisy Miller*—or does it? How do you think James himself views flirting as distinct from the characters represented on the page?
5. Is the unnamed narrator of *Four Meetings* a good friend? Should he have intervened more forcefully to protect Miss Caroline Spencer or is he ahead of his time in offering her the independence of her own judgement? Like Daisy Miller, is Caroline Spencer an 'American girl'? What might that have meant in James's time? What would it mean now?
6. In relating Caroline Spencer's experience of Europe, is James saying something about the American character? The European scene? Or just human nature?
7. In literary terms, do *Daisy Miller* and *Four Meetings* have satisfying endings? What do you think makes these stories (especially *Daisy Miller*) popular? How else might they conclude?

Recommended Reading:

Henry James: The Imagination of Genius, A Biography
Fred Kaplan

Henry James: A Critical Biography
Rebecca West

Notes of a Son and Brother (in the public domain)
Henry James