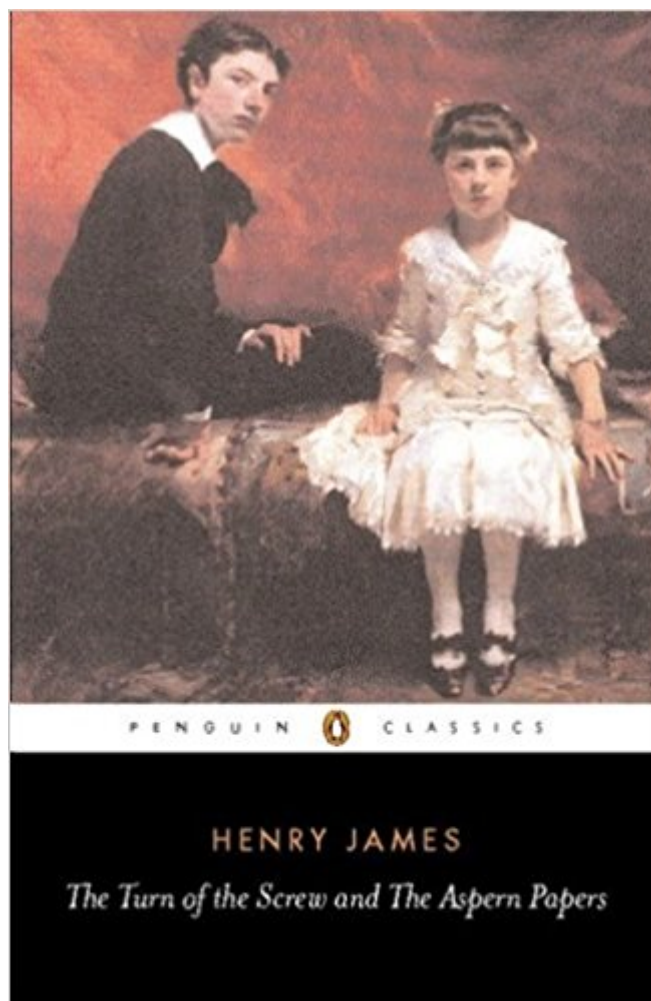


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# The Turn Of The Screw And The Aspern Papers (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

In these two chilling stories, Henry James shows himself to be a master of haunting atmosphere and unbearable tension. *The Turn of the Screw* tells of a young governess sent to a country home to take charge of two orphans, Miles and Flora. Unsettled by a sense of intense evil within the house, she soon becomes obsessed with the belief that malevolent forces are stalking the children in her care. Obsession of a more worldly variety lies at the heart of *The Aspern Papers*, the tale of a literary historian determined to get his hands on some letters written by a great poet-and prepared to use trickery and deception to achieve his aims. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The story starts conventionally enough with friends sharing ghost stories 'round the fire on Christmas Eve. One of the guests tells about a governess at a country house plagued by supernatural visitors. But in the hands of Henry James, the master of nuance, this little tale of terror is an exquisite gem of sexual and psychological ambiguity. Only the young governess can see the

ghosts; only she suspects that the previous governess and her lover are controlling the two orphaned children (a girl and a boy) for some evil purpose. The household staff don't know what she's talking about, the children are evasive when questioned, and the master of the house (the children's uncle) is absent. Why does the young girl claim not to see a perfectly visible woman standing on the far side of the lake? Are the children being deceptive, or is the governess being paranoid? By leaving the questions unanswered, *The Turn of Screw* generates spine-tingling anxiety in its mesmerized readers. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"Flosnik assumes the upper- and lower-class accents of nineteenth-century England, delivering the different voices with the rendition of a theatrical performance." ---AudioFile --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I saw the movie several years starring Olivia DeHaviland (sp?) that was based on this book by Henry James.....actually I have seen the movie twice....and that was why I was interested in reading the book.In reading the book, I was able to understand more about Catherine's father and why he acted the way he did towards her. It humanized him much more than the movie did and he was a more sympathetic character in the book than in the movie. I think he had something like a god-complex, but he did realize the deficiencies in Catherine's makeup and it distressed him greatly as he realized she would never become the type of daughterhh

I found this story a bit interesting and somewhat creepy but I didn't get that hold your breath or scared feeling about it which I thought it lacked. What I was most amazed at was in the conversations between the characters (which put emphasis on certain words ,what we might call shouty capitals or italics) is not so much as what was being said as what was implied. I thought this was quite different in stories from this time period. I did enjoy the story for the most part but his work does not compare to one of Poe's.

James wrote *The Turn of the Screw* in 1897, at a low point in his life. In 1895 he had suffered a tremendous personal and professional blow when his play *Guy Domville* was booed off the London stage. Deeply wounded, James retreated from London and took refuge in Sussex, eventually taking a long-term lease on a rambling mansion called Lamb House. Shortly thereafter, he began writing *The Turn of the Screw*, one of several works from this period that revolve around large, rambling houses. James had written ghost stories before *The Turn of the Screw*. It was a popular form,

especially in England, where, as the prologue to *The Turn of the Screw* suggests, gathering for the purpose of telling ghost stories was something of a Christmastide tradition. According to James Joyce's notebooks and his preface to the 1908 edition of *The Turn of the Screw*, the germ of the story had been a half-remembered anecdote told to him by Edward White Benson, the archbishop of Canterbury: a story of small children haunted by the ghosts of a pair of servants who wish them ill. I can recommend this great novel to every classis reader of good literature. On technical quality, I like the way it is produced and type set, very elegant.

While this is a classic James novel, I found it frustrating and I did not particularly appreciate the 'excellence' of his work this time around. James wrote well, but the subject matter of this novel was not educational or instructive. I found it depressing and a stretch of the imagination that didn't help me value the plot. Maybe reading it at some other time in my life would have been better.....a time when I had fewer worries!!!

The book itself might be a good one, but this particular printing is awful. The book is printed with tiny print and paragraph indentations missing, making such demarkations vague or otherwise undiscernable. This printing of the book is effectively illegible. I'm sorry I missed my chance to return it.

Over the years I have read this short novella, "The Turn of the Screw," three times. My first reading was when I was very, very young and in college. This was one of the works assigned in the class I was taking; a literature class, and it was one of several works as I remember. I also remember that I approached this work with what I would call absolute pragmatic ambivalence. It had to be read, so I read it. After reading it I had to write a semi-short paper, so I did. I pretty well knew what the professor wanted to hear, so that is what I regurgitated because I wanted a good grade in that particular class. I got a good grade. I did not dislike the novel, nor did I particularly like it...It was simply a job I had to do. My second reading took place in a place I did not want to be. It was a horrible place and I simply needed something to allow me to mentally detach myself from the situation I was in. A friend of mine had a copy of this work which he gave to me. James' work did the job I wanted it to do at that time. I somewhat appreciated it at the time more than the first reading. And now we come to this current, and of course most recent reading; different time, different place, different motivations and to top it off...I am now old. Since the first human scratched the first story onto a piece of papyrus there has been literary snobbery. The epicenter of this

snobbery centers on 'literary' and 'genre' fiction. On one hand we are told, by those that do the telling, that genre fiction is easy to read, easy to digest, but holds no nutritional value whatsoever. On the other side of the coin we have those people who tell us what we are supposed to think praising the popular novel and thumbing their noses at "literature," claiming that 'good literature' is in reality only a cultural artifact and the only reason we have it around is for the same reason we value a well-carved hunk of rock that no one can really interpret or really anymore cares about. This battle, if you will, has been heating up of late and is of great interest to me. I love it when people do battle over books. Anyway, I was once again motivated to pull this small work by Henry James out and give it another go. Of all the works I know, this one has been analyzed, picked apart, speculated upon, and force-fed to more people since it was written than any other. I thought it was a good place to start. As I write this, this book most certainly cannot be considered "popular fiction," although it was considered just that when it was first written. I can tell you right now, before I go on, that this third reading absolutely mesmerized me and I loved the thing from the first page to the last. Am I smarter now? Probably not. As a person quickly approaching the status of "old geezer" has my outlook on life and my perceptions changed? Probably so. Whatever the case, this book, over the years, has changed for me...I have changed; the book has not. This work was first published in 1898. It is a relatively short work and is considered by many to be the classic ghost story of that era. The premise of the plot is at first glance rather simple. A Governess is put in charge of two young children in or at an isolated mansion. The Governess sees ghosts - others do not, and she spends most of the book speculating as to how she will protect the children. Ah, but simple? No, that just ain't so! By the use of what I consider brilliant ambiguity, purposefully crafted by the author, we have so very, very much more than a simple ghost story. The arguments and discussion over this work has been raging for years and years; indeed, since it was first published. First, did the governess actually see ghosts - were they real? Or, as the other side would ask, is this a young lady with an overly active imagination touched with a bit of paranoia? Is the governess actually insane? Second we ask ourselves what about the children? The author has given strong hints that not all was well between the two children and the two people who were their former caretakers - who are by the way now dead and are indeed the two ghosts our young governess keeps seeing...or thinks she sees. There is a very, very strong hint of sexual impropriety here at best; molestation at worse. The author never tells us. Why was the young lad in the story thrown out of school? The author never tells us. Vague shadowy hints only. Third is linked with the first and deals with the governess's emotions and state of mind. There have been strong theories over the years that we are dealing with a very sexually frustrated young lady...frustrated to the point of tipping her over the edge. Again, we are

forced to anticipate the mind of James and consider the time frame in which this tale takes place. (I personally view the sexually frustration theory just slightly lame. Most of these theories popped up during a time when the public was obsessed with such matters and just about every aspect of life was linked to sexuality in one way or another.) Fiction and biography tell us strongly that young ladies who became governesses at that time were, as a whole, a very, very frustrated group of people. They were almost invariably "spinsters" with little hope of marriage usually due to reduced circumstances. These young women were well educated and indeed were in possession of a fair degree of sophistication. No prospect of marriage, little to no social life, little to no income, living under the roof of strangers, facing an endless number of rules, rules and more rules...well, quite often these women had major issues which manifested themselves in various ways; often at the expense of the children. Whether or not that was the case here...well, the reader is left to decide. So ghost or imagination, sane or insane, sexual issues on different level or not....crafty writer, James. And then we have the writing style. Long, long sentences; many having multiple subjects, inserted clauses and words, words and more words. The author, at first glance, uses a very confusing style with convoluted sentences being the norm. This is not an easy read by any means. The first time I read it was the worse, but I have to tell you that even this last reading required my reading and rereading some of the sentences in order to fully understand what the author was saying. Ah, but that was the essence of the book for me. Navigating through James's prose, once I got the rhythm, was actually fun! Each sentence was a journey leading to another journey. I personally love this stuff! If you are put off by the style, put the book aside for a couple or three years and give it another shot. You may find your wait well worth it. I have read that some feel that this is James' greatest work. I personally would not even speculate on that since I have not read all of his work. I doubt it though. As to the answer to the questions brought up; those that have been discussed for years and years...well, to be honest with you, I just don't know. And truth be told, I don't think anyone else does either. The author wrote this the way he wrote it for just that reason. He has allowed each reader to come to his or her own conclusions - right or wrong and the author has done it well! That is the true marvel of this little book as far as I am concerned. Don

Blankenship  
The Ozarks

I missed reading this story in my college English Lit. class. Great story....very old fashioned writing. The W. Wyler film "The Heiress" is the masterpiece.

I confess that I did not finish the book. I had always heard it was truly scary and horrifying, but could

not build up any horror because of the stilted old English language! I felt like I had to translate the sentences in my head as though a foreign language and it was akin to watching a horror film with commercials...the suspense is constantly broken. For previous generations I have no doubt that this was a truly wonderful, scary good read. For me...not so much.

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