

Turn of the screw



Claire Carlson English 3H February 7, 2013 Period 1 Spring Essay: Turn of the Screw Page I: The Governess and Miles Page II: The Governess and Mrs.

Grose Page III: Corruption of Innocence Henry James's Turn of the Screw is the eerie tale of a governess sent to care for two mischievous young children, Flora and Miles. Many people mistake it for a ghost story, but the story actually focuses more on the governess's relationship with the children. Her thirst for acceptance gradually grows as the story progresses, and she becomes especially fascinated with Miles.

Women have always been viewed as slightly inferior to men; they are depicted as weak and fragile creatures, only serving as a companion for man. They are manipulative and often use charm and looks as methods of persuasion. In Turn of the Screw, the governess's attitude while around Miles is flirtatious and almost inappropriate; and she uses him to fill the void of the children's beloved uncle whom she lusts for. The above example of the governess's craving for Miles's attention can be easily compared to the behavior exhibited by much of the female population today.

Note that the woman is always seeking to please the man, and strives to satisfy and serve him. The attitude of women in the modern world is becoming more and more submissive; almost voluntarily. Miles's reaction to the behavior of the unnamed governess is merely compliant, and in some instances of the novel he somewhat encourages her inappropriate behavior. Mrs. Grose, the simpleminded and somewhat slow housekeeper at the estate, represents a middle ground between the mischievous children and whimsical governess. The reader can easily conclude that the governess abuses Mrs.

Grose's quite malleable opinion of the children. In several instances, the governess consults Mrs. Grose and uses her as an outlet for her frustrations with the children. As the governess shares her ghostly encounters with Quint and Miss Jessel, she convinces Mrs. Grose that her hysteria is justified. Since Mrs. Grose is not significantly talkative, it is difficult to form a conclusion about her opinion of the children and the governess. The reader has to infer that Mrs. Grose has spent quite some time at the estate, and has much experience with the children's behavior. Mrs.

Grose doesn't necessarily agree or disagree with the statements and assertions made by the governess, she is merely a cache, storing the governess's thoughts and responding with uncomprehending feedback. The children's relationship with Mrs. Grose is somewhat distant and peculiar. They only consult her for affirmation and approval. In conclusion, Mrs. Grose is mainly an unresponsive character and is not a major influence on the circumstances of the story. Since the governess seldom approaches the children directly, we can infer that she would rather keep her knowledge of Quint and Jessel to herself.

She often consults Mrs. Grose in order to gather as much as she can about the two. The governess is afraid that the children know too much, and fears that their knowledge of Quint and Jessel's sexual relationship will affect them negatively. The fact that she is more concerned about the children knowing too much rather than protecting them from the possible harm that the ghosts can inflict, shows the reader that the governess incorporates her own fears and desires into the situation. In conclusion, *Turn of the Screw* is a much more complex and confusing story than meets the eye.

The reader must question the behavior of the governess and the children in order to gather valuable information about the ghosts, and it seems as though in certain instances that Quint and Jessel are living through Flora and Miles. The governess is indeed a much more questionable character than the book portrays her to be. From my experience with both the book and a movie interpretation of the book, I have concluded that the governess is actually the main source of the hysteria and trauma at Bly.