

# The character of frederick winterbourne from daisy miller by henry james

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In Henry James' *Daisy Miller*, Frederick Winterbourne, who was originally born in America, was raised in Geneva, Switzerland, where he was pursuing a mysterious older woman. In general, Winterbourne is a man who studies women and how they behave.

### **Being Charmed by Daisy**

When Winterbourne first sees Daisy Miller, he is talking to her brother. Having been born an American but raised as a European, he immediately says after seeing her, "American girls are the best girls," (385). He then begins to describe how she is dressed and is immediately charmed by her presence. Throughout the entirety of the story, Winterbourne states how pretty Daisy is every time he sees her, but is suspicious of her character because she has been involved with many men. He is constantly defending her to his aunt, Mrs. Castello, who thinks of Daisy as common. In the beginning of the story Winterbourne quotes that Daisy in his eyes, was a mixture of innocence and crudity. At first glance, she seemed as though she was into him and only him at the time. Because Daisy is an American, she lives her life the way she wants regardless of what other people think and has the right to be interested in any person she wants.

### **Trying to Classify Daisy**

On the other hand, Winterbourne categorizes people into social classes and cares about others' opinions simply because that is how he was brought up. Throughout the story, he constantly tries to figure out what class Daisy would fit under. As the story progresses and he follows Daisy to Rome, he begins to realize what kind of person she really is. She becomes involved

with a man by the name of Mr. Giovanelli so soon after becoming involved with Winterbourne. He states, " He is almost grateful for having found the formula that is applied to Ms. Daisy Miller," (390) This was after seeing her go off with Mr. Giovanelli. At this point in the story, he categorizes her as the type of girl who is talkative, flirtatious, and a woman who enjoys being in the company of men. It is at this part of the story where we as readers, question Winterbourne's character and why he is judging Daisy. Just as Daisy flirts with other men, Winterbourne is constantly studying other women and their behaviors while he has feelings for her, so who is he to judge Daisy and the way that she behaves?

## **The Change of Opinion**

In the beginning of the story, I believe that Mr. Winterbourne is a sympathetic character towards Daisy. For instance, every time Mrs. Walker and his aunt Mrs. Castello talk about their disapproval of Daisy and the Miller family, he is always quick to defend her and always tries to see the goodness in her character. He does not like it when people talk down on her and when they do, he is always by her side. Even though in the beginning of the story we think of him as judgmental towards women, we realize it is not his fault; that is just how he was raised. It is not his fault that he is always studying and analyzing women; it's a European trait that you do not see with most Americans.

Towards the end of the story, I feel as though Winterbourne begins to have less sympathy for Daisy. At one particular moment in the story, Winterbourne runs into Daisy and Mr. Giovanelli kissing at the Colosseum. It

is at that moment where Winterbourne simply cannot understand love and friendship. He does not understand why Daisy, who showed interest in him earlier on, is now showing interest in another man. This moment in the story shows exactly why Winterbourne is losing sympathy for Daisy and is slowly figuring out that Daisy is not that innocent and pure young woman that he tried to analyze. At this point in the story you would expect Winterbourne to undergo a change after seeing Daisy and Giovanelli together, then hearing of her death, but he does not change. This causes the readers to lose sympathy for him because of his thoughts at the end of the story and how quickly Winterbourne gets over Daisy Miller.

### **The Parallels between the Author and the Character**

To me, I feel like Henry James has identified with Frederick Winterbourne because they share similar stories and similar backgrounds. Similar to how Winterbourne was born in America and was raised in Europe, Henry James was born in America and spent the rest of his life overseas in London and Switzerland. Throughout the story, James is trying to send a message to the readers through Winterbourne and his actions. He is trying to educate the readers about the differences between the American culture and the European culture through an American girl Daisy, and a European man Winterbourne. I believe James tells the story from his point of view because he can relate to Winterbourne's character.

James is known as a realistic writer, meaning he does not write far-fetched non-fiction stories. The events that happen in Winterbourne's story are real life situations, such as analyzing women and trying to figure out what kind of

person they really are, and having sympathy with others. James does a good job of using those examples to help the readers understand the life of a European from Winterbourne's eyes and why he thinks the way he thinks.