



The Turn of the Screw, The Aspern Papers and Two Stories (Barnes Noble Classics Series)

Henry James , David L. Sweet (Illustrator)

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The Turn of the Screw, The Aspern Papers and Two Stories, by **Henry James**, is part of the *Barnes & Noble Classics* series, which offers quality editions at affordable prices to the student and the general reader, including new scholarship, thoughtful design, and pages of carefully crafted extras. Here are some of the remarkable features of *Barnes & Noble Classics*:

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Joseph Conrad once said of his friend **Henry James**, “As is meet for a man of his descent and tradition, Mr. James is the historian of fine consciences.” As it turns out, James was also incredibly gifted at writing exceptional ghost stories. This collection—including “*The Beast in the Jungle*” and “*The Jolly Corner*”—features James’s finest supernatural tales, along with criticism, a discussion of the legacies of James’s writing, and provocative study questions.

David L. Sweet is a professor of American and comparative literature at The American University in Cairo. He has also taught at Princeton, The City University of New York, The American University of Paris, and Columbia University, where he received his doctorate in Comparative Literature. His book *Savage Sight/Constructed Noise: Poetic Adaptations of Painterly Techniques in the French and American Avant-Gardes* will be published next year by the University of North Carolina.

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From Reader Review The Turn of the Screw, The Aspern Papers and Two Stories (Barnes Noble Classics Series) for online ebook

Betsy Gant says

Call me an addict of Henry James now! Kudos to Dr. Dickey for mentioning him in our psychology classes! I enjoyed all four stories in this Barnes & Noble edition. The Turn of the Screw was definitely my favorite story. The Beast in the Jungle and The Jolly Corner were both surprisingly good! While the overall plot was a bit boring in The Aspern Papers, the Venice setting was intriguing and the characters made up for the slow plot.

Andy rogers says

I have just recently read

The Turn of the Screw

by Henry James. The genre of this novel is gothic satire. This was a very great book! I would recommend it to anyone who likes to read a good horror story. Henry James wrote The Turn of the Screw using mainly 1st person. There was little use of dialog in this book. This book kept me on the edge of my seat throughout the whole book. This book was very exciting from the first page to the last. Henry James used some unusual forms of death in this story such as fright and drowning. The setting of The Turn of the Screw is based in the 19th century in Bly, a country home in Essex, England. The tone of The Turn of the Screw is scary. Henry James wrote this when he was sad after one of his plays was booed off stage. One of the most challenging features of The Turn of the Screw is how frequently characters make indirect hints or use vague language rather than communicate directly and clearly. Some motifs in The Turn of the Screw are vision and silence. The story begins when an anonymous narrator recalls a Christmas Eve gathering at an old house, where guests listen to one another's ghost stories. A guest named Douglas introduces a story that involves two children-Flora and Miles-and his sister's governess, with whom he was in love with. After obtaining the governess's written record of events from his home, he provides a few introductory details. A handsome bachelor persuaded the governess to take a position as governess for his niece and nephew in an isolated country home after the previous governess died. Douglas begins to read from the written record, and the story shifts to the governess's point of view as she narrates her strange experience. The main character, the Governess is a 22 year old woman in charge of teaching Flora and Miles. She sees ghost and none ever admits to seeing what she says so she thinks she is insane. Miles is 10 and Flora is 8, Miles is very well behaved, and Flora is very well mannered. The headmaster expels Miles from school and refuses to specify why. The death of Miles came as a shock to me because the Governess rarely indicates she is afraid of the ghost harming the children.

I really enjoyed reading this book because I like horror stories and ghost stories.

Stephanie says

The Aspern Papers: I loved reading a story set in Venice. The mercenary attitudes on both sides were fun to

watch, and the ending got me right in the gut. Good work, story.

Turn of the Screw: I've read this a few times and it's still creepy.

"The Beast in the Jungle": I thought Henry James didn't realize how incredibly dense the protagonist was, but then I reached the end and JOKE IS ON ME also this story was upsetting ahahaha.

"The Jolly Corner": Spencer needs to get a better hobby.

Ellen says

The Turn of the Screw: 5 stars

The Aspern Papers: 5 stars

Two Stories: Let's forget those existed...

I had read Turn of the Screw in my 12th grade English class as a Halloween story, and at that time, I didn't get very much from it. I didn't see how subtle the plot points were and my opinion of the story was largely influenced by the discussions that were held in class. However, this second reading of it was so much better! It is a fantastic Halloween read that actually managed to give me chills. It's not a standard horror novel, but one of the mind, where suspicion and creepiness abounds. It's a ghost story, though, and the three central questions are important and guided my reading: is the governess insane? are the children sinister? are the ghosts real? My answer is yes, no, and yes. Although I have heard many other theories that have just as much evidence as mine! I'm sure my opinion will change if I ever re-read this story. There is a haunting sense about this book which makes me wish it was made into a movie. At the end, you are left with more questions than answers, and theories for days! It's my go-to ghost story.

The Aspern Papers was something I had low expectations for. The premise was vague and I thought that in a novella format, not much could be done. I was wrong. This was an exceptional piece of short fiction in the classic style of Henry James. What I liked best about this book was its situational existence in Venice, during the era of Grand Tours when everyone spoke at least conversational French because that was what people in high society did. I wish I lived in that era. Going to Italy was a journey and although language was always a barrier, it somehow wasn't, and people managed to live extraordinary and often extravagant lives. The depiction of the era was beautiful. I also really appreciated how, although we didn't meet the friend of the narrator, through descriptions of him, his letter, and his association with the narrator's personality, one can know everything there is to know about that man. He's repugnant. And it's delightful that without seeing him, one can know his character. Very well written and well crafted. The narrator is despicable and gets what he deserves, though even by the last line, it seems he never learned his lesson.

The Two Stories seemed to have been written almost by a different person. The Beast in the Jungle was an emotional read and one that made very little sense until the ending, when all the feels hit. The Jolly Corner was one that seemed so abstract and odd that I wasn't a fan. It's a unique concept, but not one that I care to further pursue. Overall, the two stories are rather indifferent for me, as I didn't quite like them as much as the other two longer stories. This is what brings the rating to a solid 4 stars.

Jamie says

This book started out a little slow for me. I am not much into short stories so I wasn't sure if I was going to like it or not but I really wanted to read The Turn of the Screw so I started the book. First was The Aspern Papers which I couldn't get into it for awhile, my mind kept wandering, but towards the end I found it interesting enough. It definitely provoked feelings of anxiety and I am always grateful for a story that provides me with some sort of feeling or emotion. Next was The Turn of the Screw. Holy cow. It was scary!!! I was literally afraid while i was reading it! It wasn't gruesome or gory at all, just spooky! it really creeped me out, i loved it! It was sort of confusing though and I definitely searched for summaries of the book afterwards on line just to see what others interpretations were. I loved it. Then came Beast in the Jungle. I really liked this story. It was short and interesting. At times I glazed over but i like the overall plot. It had a good message. Finally, I read The Jolly Corner. It was also scary! I was afraid reading it at night in my room as well! But it was odd and I felt it could have ended better. All in all, throughout the book some of the storied kept losing my attention but I liked them well enough overall and I loved The Turn of the Screw. I think I will read more Henry James.

Daniel (Attack of the Books!) Burton says

I didn't manage to finish this...it was just too slow. That said, I really enjoy Henry James use of language, his careful description, and the way he steps into the protagonists. At times, I very much felt the creepy that he intended.

However--get to the point. Dan Brown isn't a fabulous writer, but he could teach James a few lessons about pacing.

Colin Murphy says

James has mastered the art of suspense. The Aspern Papers and The Jolly Corner were superb.

Jessica Lave says

I can't remember who recommended "Turn of the Screw" (I want to say it was Stephen King in *On Writing...*), but I'm glad I finally got through this book so I could read that story!

I read James' "Daisy Miller" for a college lit class and loved it, so I thought this book would be easy to get through, but the flowery language is pretty tough when you're not used to reading that sort of thing regularly. It takes a lot longer to get through because each word has so much more depth. All of the stories (there are four) in this book are short, or novella length, but they have a lot more content and substance to them than their page count might suggest.

I found the "Aspern Papers" (the first story in the book) to be a little tedious and not as revelatory or shocking as the synopsis made it out to be. I do love the setting though, so that made it worth the read.

Because of how slow I found the first story, I had a hard time finally getting around to "The Turn of the Screw", and an even harder time getting into it because it gets off to a slow start as well. When I finally picked the book up again (a few years after I had finished the "Aspern Papers"!), it was easy to enjoy it. Though a bit antiquated now because of how far the horror genre both in literature and film has pushed our sensibilities, it is still a great ghost story and told so beautifully.

"The Beast in the Jungle" is a great suspense at first, but it devolves as it goes on into a story far less fantastic (I mean that in the sense of "fantasy" not as a qualifier of its readability) than it starts out.

"The Jolly Corner" is sort of the opposite. It has a sort of generic beginning and becomes something much darker and more interesting as it progresses. The house on the Jolly Corner actually reminds me a bit of the *House of Leaves*, though I can't really put my finger on the connection I felt there.

Overall, even if I wasn't crazy about how the stories themselves played out, they are beautifully written. These days, a lot of authors and people giving advice on writing will tell you not to use such flowery language, but James knew what he was doing. It's not flowery in that it's excessive or confusing; he just has a way with words that makes everything sound so much lovelier and I felt a strong sense of nostalgia reading these stories. So romantic-sounding, in spite of the subject matter. I gave it three stars overall, but that's not really fair to place on all four stories as a whole because they were each very different and each had different merits and shortcomings.

"Aspern Papers": 3 stars

"The Turn of the Screw": 5 stars

"Beast in the Jungle": 3 stars

"Jolly Corner": 4 stars

Jason Mather says

I know and respect that these are classics. For my personal taste, they're just too dry to recommend highly.

Tiffany says

Of the selected writings contained in this book, I most enjoyed "The Aspern Papers," followed by "The Beast in the Jungle." The main event, "The Turn of the Screw," had such beautifully ornate narration and dialogue, but the vague nature of what was actually happening beneath all those gorgeous words was frustrating. And the concept of "The Jolly Corner," was cool, but, for me, it was the least successful, because the scant action and character development were just absolutely drowned in excess verbiage, which was not especially pleasant to the ear (like it was in "Turn of the Screw") and instead was only ornately neurotic and off-putting.

Alec says

Henry James wrote The Aspern Papers as a testament to the audacity and complexity humans go through to achieve their utmost desires. As the subject of the tale is the attempts of the narrator to obtain the papers of Jeffery Aspern, his subsequent actions and conflicts adhere to the overall purpose stated. The amount of

patience and resolve required to endure such dismal and foreboding conditions for a love of poetry cannot be compared with any degree of accuracy. In essence, the story addresses vivid portrayals of passion and determination, key elements of anyone's love of anything or anyone. The relatability of James's story is awesome, inspiring deep thought yet shallow response.

The theme of *The Aspern Papers* is quite complex, as James writes impeccably. The task of deciphering his true meaning is lengthy and all-consuming. However, the theme can most easily be defined as purposelessness. The unnamed crusader retains little regard for his life other than his quest for the papers. Likewise, Miss Tina (the old lady's niece) represents the pain and suffering endured by those who let others control every aspect of their life. Her purpose is non-existent, as the fiery Miss Bourdeau believes herself to be self-sufficient. Miss Bourdeau remains an enigma for most of the story, allowing that veil of mystery to hide her real passion of doing nothing pertinent to anything. Her chief pastime is the ridicule of Miss Tina, whom she believes to be dull and unimaginative.

Henry James possesses a writing style unlike any I have ever encountered. The closest author in comparison would be Voltaire in his work *Candide*. In a regard they both utilize sophisticated language to convey even the simplest of action. Unlike a high school student with a thesaurus, that complexity is well appreciated and enacted, adding much to the story. James will write of an event worth six lines but contribute to its inception and duration an entire page, giving an extremely detailed background to the emotions and thoughts of the characters. Never have I read a story in which the author spends more ink on the conceptual mind than on the physical being.

James's literature is truly remarkable; I had to read the entire story in one sitting. The book's irrepressible allure can be best attributed to how it was woven together. I enjoyed the mind games played between the three characters, as well as the descriptive language. I disliked the abrupt nature of the ending, but alas it is the nature of shorter novels to end as quickly as they had begun. I would recommend this book to anyone that enjoys literature with depth and artistry.

Nog says

This is a perfect introduction to Henry James, because it collects shorter works from his middle and late periods. As such, it gives you an idea of how his style evolved over the course of thirty years. I found *The Aspern Papers* (1888) to be the most accessible and somewhat realistic, whereas *The Jolly Corner* (1908) was rather obtuse and unrealistic.

However, I have a real problem enjoying Henry James. The central problem is a lack of lucidity, that obtuseness, a tendency toward abstraction, characters whose speech sound more like the narration than how people really talk, and those lengthy sentences that require not only concentration but also a willingness to put up with a lot of really stilted prose rife with phrases juxtaposed, inserted willy-nilly, causing the reader to slow down to a crawl and reject any hope of meaningful flow.

The narrator of *The Turn of the Screw* illustrates how James himself doesn't seem to be able to capture real human beings of various ages and walks of life. This simple governess writes as if she herself were a Cambridge don, whereas the children seem like miniature Henry Jameses themselves. I found myself distracted by all this instead of being immersed in the storyline.

But it is in the last two short pieces that this grandiose style overwhelms any possibility of emotional connection with the characters, who seem more like puppets for James' agenda than sympathetic people with anything resembling real-life problems. *The Beast of the Jungle* was a real grind; its premise is rather absurd.

The Jolly Corner is sort of a variation on that one.

By default, I give the nod to The Aspern Papers as the best thing here, as it actually contains no sentences that are head-scratchers. For a way more enjoyable variation on that plot, I heartily recommend My Search for Warren Harding by Robert Plunket, which is a laugh-out-loud take that is also a real send-up of L.A. in the 1970's.

Jackie says

Oddly enough, "The Turn of the Screw" was my least favorite one out of the four stories in this book.

"The Aspern Papers" and "The Beast in the Jungle" however... my goodness. Completely worth the read.

Ben Lainhart says

Why did it take me so long to read Henry James? "The Beast in the Jungle" is one of the best novellas that I've ever read; the craftsmanship and emotion in the final paragraph is absolutely stunning. I'm looking forward to getting acquainted with his longer works.

Jerri Brissette says

Talk about a case of the movie being better than the book! I put this on my list to read because I have, of course, heard of Henry James, seen one of the many movies of The Turn of The Screw, and it's listed as a "classic". I feel that I should read classics, just because they are. Ok, so I know that the English language of that era was more eloquent, had more flourish, which I can appreciate, than the demolished modern version of same. Also, I know that it seemed to take much longer to say something that we now would shorten to a few words. Still, Henry James just carries it too far. Verbose. I mean, really, did he actually find it necessary to use three pages to say what could have been said in one sentence? Especially in The Aspern Papers. Boring, boring. Same is true of The Beast In The Jungle, which was totally silly, and that's being kind. As for The Turn of The Screw, at first I thought he had a good supernatural story going there, but it really falls flat. Yep, the movie built more tension and made the end more dramatic. Sorry, Mr. James, you cannot tell a story.
