Henry James

The Turn of the Screw

1843 He was born in New York City.
1855 He started attending school after his early education with private tutors.
1871 His first novel Watch and Ward was published in The Atlantic Monthly.
1876 He settled in London.
1881 The Portrait of a Lady was published.
1898 ‘The Turn of the Screw’ was published.
1916 He died.

Page 8 – exercise 1

1843 He was born in New York City.
1855 He started attending school after his early education with private tutors.
1871 His first novel Watch and Ward was published in The Atlantic Monthly.
1876 He settled in London.
1881 The Portrait of a Lady was published.
1898 ‘The Turn of the Screw’ was published.
1916 He died.

Page 8 – exercise 2

– his father: had strong moral and intellectual influence on his children.
– Harvard Law School: attended for only a year before deciding to become a writer.
– Paris: stayed here in 1855, meeting many influential artists and writers.
– London: moved to London in 1876 and was to spend the rest of his live in England.
– Flaubert: one of the writers he met in Paris during his Parisian stay.

Page 8 – exercise 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>culture clash between Europeans and Americans.</td>
<td>Daisy Miller; The Portrait of a Lady; What Maisie Knew; The Turn of the Screw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the adult world viewed from the perspective of children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 9 – exercise 4

Unlike James’ realistic novels, the novella The Turn of the Screw is a ghost story. It shares the theme of an adult’s world viewed by children together with ambiguity.

d. Is the governess influenced by Puritan ideas?
e. What is James saying about Puritanism?

Page 9 – exercise 5

a. Are Miles and Flora angels or devils?
b. Does the governess really see ghosts or is she hallucinating them?
c. Is the governess a heroic figure or is she mad?

da. Is the governess influenced by Puritan ideas?
b. What is James saying about Puritanism?

Page 9 – exercises 1-5

Open answers.

Prologue

Page 15 – exercise 1

a. Douglas; he is not alone but in company.
b. Probably evening
c. Christmas Eve

d. She was his sister’s governess. He met her during his school holidays.
e. He hasn’t got the manuscript.
f. She was in love with her employer.

g. She was his sister’s governess. He met her during his school holidays.
h. He hasn’t got the manuscript.

Page 15 – exercise 3

a. (24/12) and (28/12).
b. 1. b 2. d 3. c 4. a

c. 1. c 2. d 3. h 4. e 5. g 6. a

No b and f.

d. She was his sister’s governess. He met her during his school holidays.
e. He hasn’t got the manuscript.
f. She was in love with her employer.

g. She was his sister’s governess. He met her during his school holidays.
h. He hasn’t got the manuscript.

Page 16 – exercise 4

The correct order is:
1. c 2. d 3. h 4. e 5. g 6. a

No b and f.

Page 16 – exercise 5

a. the governess was ten years older than Douglas.
b. the governess has been dead for twenty years.
c. Douglas had waited forty years to tell the story.

Page 17 – exercise 7

a.
1. What did the last governess die of?
2. Why had the other candidates refused?
3. Why must the governess never contact him again?
b. No
b. corruption / innocence  good / evil  sanity / madness  doubt / certainty
c. Innocence: Miles is a beautiful child; corruption: Miles is expelled from his school. Or simply good / evil.

Page 26 – exercise 3
– Why was Miles expelled from his school?
– What had he done?
– What happened to the previous governess?

Page 26 – exercise 4
a. ‘I spoke to Miles and Flora but they didn’t answer me’
b. 1. The governess is referring to the master.
   2. Mrs Grose is not. She speaks in the past tense, but it is not clear who she is referring to.
c. 1. some other man is involved in the story not only the master
   2. she probably knows what really happened to the previous governess

Page 27 – exercise 5
a. – b. Open answers.

Page 27 – exercise 6
Open answers.

Page 28 – exercise 1

Page 28 – exercise 2
Positive, specifically innocence: divine; He seemed to know nothing in the world except love (p. 29).

Page 33 – exercise 1
a. She wanted to protect them. She thought she could teach Miles.
b. She liked going for walks around the grounds.
c. She imagined meeting her employer.
d. She saw a man at the top of one of the towers.
e. She spent her days teaching the children.

Well, I must have been a remarkable young woman to cover up the remarkable things that soon began to happen (p. 30).

b. Possible title: The Man on the Tower
Possible answers:
- the realisation that the person she saw was not her employer (a reassuring object of desire) but someone she had never seen before (unknown object of insecurity)
- it was dark
- she was alone
- the tower of the great house has a gothic appearance
- the man appeared to be at home in his surroundings, so accentuating the narrator’s alienation
- he stared at her apparently undisturbed

Page 35 – exercise 5
- the question of what had happened at Miles’ school;
- things were not going well at home (p. 32).

Page 35 – exercise 1

Page 35 – exercise 2
The reinforcement of confusion and doubt. Is the governess mad? Did she really see Peter Quint? Why is Mrs Grose frightened? Does she think the governess is mad? What does she know about Bly that she does not want to tell?

Page 40 – exercise 2
b. Picture a. is not elegant; picture c. has blond hair.

Page 41 – exercise 4
a. They are both dead, they both exerted some kind of influence over the children.
b. 1. true
2. false; Peter Quint was seen wearing his master’s clothes
3. true
c. Logically, we should expect the appearance of the last governess.

Page 41 – exercise 5
Open answer.

Page 41 – exercise 6
Open answers.

Part III
Page 40 – exercise 1
a. Mrs Grose / the governess
b. the governess / Mrs Grose

Governesses and upper-class children
Page 45 – exercise 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Then</th>
<th>Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• For a woman to succeed in life she had to marry.</td>
<td>• A woman does not have to marry in order to have success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• On marriage, a woman’s property became her husband’s.</td>
<td>• On marriage, a woman’s property does not become her husband’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A middle-class woman with no money had little chance of marrying.</td>
<td>• A woman with no money can get married.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 45 – exercise 2
a. 1. £20: the amount Charlotte Bronte earned as a governess
2. £9: the annual pay of a maid-of-all-work
3. £200: the income of a middle-class family sufficient to keep a servant
4. £75: average annual earnings of a skilled artisan

Page 46 – exercise 1

Page 46 – exercise 4
She was as a governess socially an equal but she would never perform the other roles associated with a lady: that of wife and mother.

Page 46 – exercise 5
Open answers.

Page 46 – exercise 1
b.

Part IV
Page 54 – exercise 1
1. b  2. c  3. c  4. b  5. a
Page 55 – exercise 2

Page 56 – exercise 3
1. ✓  2. her  3. did  4. ✓  5. be 6. that  7. that  8. ✓  9. most  10. most 11. sure  12. due  13. ✓  14. and
Page 56 – exercise 4
a. She didn’t see anyone and the governess is right; Flora and Miles have a special relationship with the ghost of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel.

Page 57 – exercise 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we learn about her</th>
<th>What we don’t learn about her</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• she had an affair with Peter Quint despite social differences</td>
<td>• why she left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Miles spent time with Quint and ignored Mrs. Grose’s objections</td>
<td>• why it was not possible for her to stay at Bly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the cause of her death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• why she didn’t look after Miles/why she let Miles stay with Quint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. creation of mystery, suspense

Page 57 – exercise 1

Part V

Page 62 – exercise 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Where are they?</th>
<th>How are they described?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Quint</td>
<td>on the staircase</td>
<td>he seemed like a living human being; a criminal (p. 59).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>in her bedroom</td>
<td>beautiful blue eyes (p. 60).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Jessel</td>
<td>sitting on the lower stairs</td>
<td>she looked very sad (p. 60).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles</td>
<td>on the lawn</td>
<td>poor little Miles! (p. 60).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 62 – exercise 2

Page 63 – exercise 3
a. the number of times Flora’s bed was empty

Page 63 – exercise 4
– some awful memories of my own (p. 58). What awful memories are they?
– She interprets the children’s behaviour as deception
– Perhaps I myself am a ghost she thinks (p. 59).
– she does not see Miss Jessel in the fire
– she is obviously also physically tired as a result of not sleeping (for ten nights I stayed awake late…) (p. 60)

Page 63 – exercise 5
1. The reader hasn’t got enough information to make clear decisions about what is happening.
2. What Miles did at his school was so serious that he was expelled.
3. Meeting the master once was enough to convince the governess to accept the job.
4. The governess’ father wasn’t wealthy enough to provide his daughter with a private income.
5. Flora’s age means she can sleep in the same room as the governess.

Page 64 – exercise 6
‘The governess really saw the ghost’
– how could she give such detailed description of the two ghosts that Mrs Grose was able to identify them? On hearing the governess’s descriptions, Mrs Grose names the ghosts;
– Miles was expelled for a serious offence. This angelic appearance at Bly is deceptive;
– The children spent long periods of time with Quint and Miss Jessel who, Mrs Grose declares, had a bad influence over them;
– What was Miles doing on the lawn at night?
‘The governess hallucinated them’
– She is unstable. She has obsessive feelings for her master. She imagines seeing and talking to him during her walks in the grounds;
– She gives a hint of the ‘awful’ past she has had;
– She admits imagining herself to be a ghost (Perhaps I myself am a ghost) (p. 59).
– Her descriptions of Quint and Jessel are vague.

Page 65 – exercise 7
Open answers.

Page 65 – exercise 1
– Miles;
– playing a trick.

Part VI

Page 70 – exercise 1
a. She shared her secrets and believed her.
b. She had no imagination.
c. She felt Miles could not give a reasonable explanation for his action.
d. He wanted the governess to think that he was bad.
e. Seeing Flora out of her bed and looking out of the window, the governess would look out of the window, too.
1. Deborah Kerr, star of countless films first in Britain and then in Hollywood (From Here to Eternity is one of her most successful)
2. Jack Clayton; English director who made Room at the Top in England and found world success with The Great Gatsby in 1974.
3. Sir Michael Redgrave (father of Vanessa Redgrave) and one of Britain’s greatest post-war actors. Belonged to the theatrical trio of greats - Sir Lawrence Olivier, Sir Ralph Richardson and Sir Michael Redgrave – all three found success outside the theatre.
4. Famous British cameraman who also specialised in directing horror films.
5. Capote is one of America’s most important novelists of the second half of the 20th century. His books include the novella ‘Breakfast at Tiffany’s’ and the novels Music for Chameleons and In Cold Blood.

Appearance
Miles and Flora have never mentioned Quint and Miss Jessel.
They seem beautiful and innocent.
Miles is reading to Flora.
Miles and Flora live at Bly with the governess and Mrs Grose.

Governess’s interpretation
They meet Peter Quint and Miss Jessel constantly.
They are thinking about the dead.
They are talking about Quint and Miss Jessel.
They live with Quint and Mrs Jessel.

Page 71 – exercise 3
a. Open answers.
b. Any possible answers are acceptable. E.g. If he comes to Bly he’ll dismiss the governess. If he dismisses the governess, he’ll find another woman.
c. Any possible answers are acceptable. E.g. If he comes to Bly he’ll dismiss the governess. If he dismisses the governess, he’ll find another woman.

Internet Film Project
Page 75
Using a search engine:
Insert the title of the film (The Innocents) and the date (1961) into any search engine (e.g.: www.virgilio.it, www.google.com, www.yahoo.com) for a list of possible Web sites.

Part VII
Page 82 – exercise 1
a. the governess’s past: her family, her pets, Goody Gosling.
b. Ghosts and the children’s memories of Quint and Miss Jessel.
c. She was afraid that she had lost her capacity to see the ghost and therefore protect the children.

d. They continued to see the ghosts whilst she (the governess) did not.
e. They were too beautiful. Probably the children’s uncle did not deserve to receive them as he had no interest in his nephew and niece.

Page 82 – exercise 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What he says</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have been good, haven’t I? Except that one night. I could do something bad like that again.</td>
<td>Devil He communicated openly with Quint and wanted the governess to see him doing it. Little Angel He could not sleep. He wanted to play a trick on her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I want to be with my own sort.</td>
<td>With the devil/ghost people like Quint and Miss Jessel With boys of his own age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am happy anywhere.</td>
<td>He has supernatural powers that go beyond conventional ideas of happiness. He wants to go back to school. It is not important where.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part VIII

Page 96 – exercise 1

Page 97 – exercise 2
a. – he knew the governess was outside his door
   – he was thinking of the governess
   – he blows out the candle
b. – he never explains ‘this strange business of ours ... (and) all the rest’
   – he doesn’t answer the governess’s question: ‘What happened ... before you came back (and) before you went away’.

Page 97 – exercise 3
a. She lies about her ‘meeting’ with Miss Jessel: answering Mrs Grose’s question ‘Do you mean she spoke?’, she reports that Miss Jessel said she ‘suffers the torments of the damned, and that she wants Flora to share them’ (p. 91). The governess made no mention of this in her description of the meeting in Part VII.
b. he was waiting for Peter Quint to tell him what to say (p. 92).

Internet Project

Page 99
Suggested sites:
Go to www.blackcat-cideb.com or www.cideb.it
Insert the title of this book in the search.
Open the page for Turn of the Screw. Click on the project link symbol (simbolo) to find a list of suggested Web sites.

Part IX

Page 108 – exercise 1
a. 1. c 2. e 3. a 4. i 5. f 6. b 7. l 8. h 9. j 10. d 11. k 12. g
b. Various possibilities: f. h. k.
title f. : ‘Where, my dear, is Miss Jessel?’ (p. 103).
c. Open answers.

Page 108 – exercise 2
a. 1.
b. Quint and Miss Jessel
c. Mrs Grose believes her, so proving that the governess is not mad.
d. various possibilities
   1. ‘I’ll call you as soon as I get there’ (child to parent / partner to partner / husband to wife)
   2. ‘I’ll do it when I get back / tomorrow’ (child to parent)
   3. ‘I’ll do it straight away!’ (servant to mistress of the house)
   4. ‘Of course! I’ll give it back to you as soon as I’ve written this.’ (friend to friend)
   5. ‘I’ll sell you better quality meat for less money’ (tradesman to client)

Puritanism

Page 88 – exercise 1-6
1. b 2. a 3. b 4. c 5. c 6. b

Page 89 – exercise 7
a. + b. Open answers.
His (Miles') face was as white as the face outside the window (p. 115).

Quint ... (was) like a hungry beast (p. 115).

Miles and the governess are trapped and in danger – whether it be from outside (Quint) or from inside (the governess) – and Miles is in danger.

According to the governess, he cannot.

Again according to the governess, she realises that she has managed to free Miles from Quint and he is sad because of this.

Part X

Page 122 – exercise 1

a. Flora and Miles are two young children – sister and brother – who live at Bly.

b. The previous governess – Miss Jessel. Peter Quint also previously worked at Bly.

c. The governess was convinced that Flora (and her brother) could communicate with the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel. Admitting she could see the ghost of Miss Jessel, Flora would prove that the governess was not mad.

d. The children are orphans.

e. He might confess a supernatural relationship with Quint.

Page 123 – exercise 2

a. She uses a simile to compare them to a newly-married couple – Open answer.

– Miles cannot see Quint.

– According to the governess, Miles realises that she has managed to free him from Quint.

b. She uses similes:

– He stood like a guard outside a prison

Page 124 – exercise 3

Miles moved his head like a dog trying to pick up a scent. Then he looked around furious at seeing nothing (p. 18).

Miles is transformed from an angel to a beast. The question is whether this is:

– Miles’ true nature being revealed by the governess, who wishes to save him; or

– the fear and panic that an innocent child feels when alone with a madwoman.

Page 124 – exercise 4

Miles is evil (or is possessed by an evil Quint) and dies dispossessed of the devil. Death is liberation from evil.

– The governess, insane, has frightened the innocent child to death.

Possible answer: Dispossessed
1. Answer these questions.

1. Who has the manuscript?
2. What was strange about the position offered to the governess?
3. Where is Miles when the story begins?
4. What were Peter Quint and Miss Jessel’s positions when they worked at Bly?
5. What does Mrs Grose tell the governess about Peter Quint and Miss Jessel?
6. Where does the governess see the ‘horrors’?
7. What differences are there in the governess’ account of her meeting with Miss Jessel in Part VII and her account to Mrs Grose in Part VIII?
8. What events by the lake convince the governess that Flora can see Miss Jessel?
9. Why does the governess remain in the house with Miles after Mrs Grose and Flora leave?
10. What is the result of Miles being ‘dispossessed’ at the end of the story?

2. Who do the words in bold refer to?

1. We were amazed that he had not told his story in all those years.
2. ‘Are you afraid that he is a danger to the children?’
3. I wanted to be with her always and take full responsibility for her.
4. ‘She was a charming person, but she was ten years older than I.’
5. He explained that he was the guardian of his nephew and niece.
6. She looked at me for a moment, and then she vanished.
7. It was clear to me that he wanted them to see him.
8. She still thought the children were beautiful little angels.

3. The Turn of the Screw is ‘ambiguous’ (see p. 70). At the end of the story many questions are left to the reader’s imagination. Imagine you are one of Douglas’ guests. Make a list of questions you would like to ask Douglas at the end of the story.

4. The Turn of the Screw is often interpreted in two ways:

a. Apparition theory: The ghosts are real. They were evil people and wanted to possess the children and eventually bring them into their world. The governess realises this and does everything in her power to save them and their souls.
b. Hallucination theory: There are no ghosts. The governess imagines them. She is an anxious, obsessive person who starts believing her own hallucinations.

Look at the sentences below. Decide which of the two theories (a. or b.) they belong to.

1. The governess finds out the information she has about Peter Quint and Miss Jessel from Mrs Grose who is knowingly helping her to create her own illusion.
2. Douglas speaks of the governess as a charming person and we have no reason to doubt what she says.
3. The governess is able to describe the ghosts in great detail. Mrs Grose recognises them from her description.
4. None of the other people in the house actually see the ghosts, only the governess.
5. The children seem more frightened of the governess and her behaviour than anything else.
6. The ghosts are using the governess in the story to do their evil work.

5. Which of the theories do you believe in? Why?

6. Who are ‘The Innocents’ in the 1961 film based on The Turn of the Screw. Are they really innocent?

7. Do you think The Turn of the Screw is really a ghost story?
Douglas

Her employer insisted that she must never contact him. The previous governess had died.

At school. (He was living at the same school).

Mr Quint was the master’s personal servant. Miss Jessel was the governess.

She tells her that Peter Quint stayed at Bly and was in charge when the master left. He wore the master’s clothes. He looked after Miles and was ‘too free’ with him. (p.47). He was clever and trusted by the master. Miss Jessel was the former governess. She was ‘young and pretty’ (p.24). She left Bly on vacation and died. She was evil and so was Peter Quint. ‘… they were both evil.’ (p. 52).

Peter Quint: On the top of one of the towers of the great house. (p. 30); outside the dining room window (p. 36), (p. 115); on the stairs near the great window (p. 59). Miss Jessel: By the lake (p.49), (p.103); on the stairs (p.60); in the school room (p.80).

In Part VII she says that Miss Jessel didn’t speak, she just looked at her for a moment and then she vanished. In Part VIII she tells Mrs Grose that Miss Jessel spoke to her and said ‘… she suffers the torments of the damned, and she wants Flora to share them!’

She turns her back to the water the first time the governess sees Miss Jessel at the lake. ‘Ever since I saw Miss Jessel by the lake Flora has always wanted to go there on our walks.’ (p. 102). Somebody had used the boat to cross the lake and had hidden it. Flora was on the other side of the lake. When she spoke to her Flora looked liked an old woman, as if she was someone else. Flora looked like an old, old woman. (p. 103).

To find out why he had to leave school. To try and get Miles to admit that he and Flora can see the ghosts and maybe that he is under their power.

He dies. ... his little heart dispossessed, had stopped. (p. 120).

Douglas’ guests/Douglas

Mrs Grose/Peter Quint

Flora

the governess/Douglas

the rich gentleman (the master)/Miles and Flora

Miss Jessel

the governess/Miles and Flora/Peter Quint

Mrs Grose

Open answer.

Open answer.

Miles and Flora.

Possible answers:
Yes. Their uncle can’t look after them. The ghosts use them because they are innocent and so do all the other adults who protect their own interests and not the children’s interests.

No. They make the adults they meet believe they are innocent. They are evil and that is why the ghosts have contacted them.

Open answer.