

This novel takes place in the Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Square in the mid-nineteenth (19th) century. Dr. Sloper further asks Catherine if she should "like to be left in such a place as this, to starve [...] that will be your fate—that's how he will leave you." For Dr. Sloper, the desolate environment symbolizes not his daughter's frightening but necessary emancipation, but the bleak outcome he foresees for Catherine if she persists on the path she's chosen. Angry, Catherine replies that his accusation of Morris "is not true [...] and you ought not to say it." At times the reader may be given direct access to this focal character's own "voice" and thoughts through dialogue or presented dramatically through monologue, represented speech or stream of consciousness. On all occasions, the reader's access is indirect; it is the narrator's voice, somewhere on the sidelines, that tells the story and transmits the action, characterization, description, analysis, and other informing details upon which the reader's understanding and interpretation depend. The character chosen as narrative center, and often referred to through the use of a third person pronoun as he or she, may be the protagonist or may be some other major character. Often, however, the assignment is given to a minor character that functions in the role of an onlooker, watching and speculating from the periphery of the story and only minimally involved, if at all, in its action. The author of *Washington Square*, as is typical of such Victorian novels, inserts his own voice and opinions in the novel from the first chapter by addressing the reader directly. The author often makes statements that inform the reader of what is to come or by suggesting that an action previously described will impact the plot in a specific way. The point of view of this novel is typical of novels written in the time period in which this novel was written. The author writes the novel as though talking directly to the reader in a conversational way, having a nice conversation. This adds a tone to the novel that is informal and at times humorous. This novel is narrated from a third person omniscient point of view in order to allow the writer to have better control over the plot. This is a technique in which the narrator distinguishes the thoughts and feelings of all of the characters in the story, therefore the narrator usually provides his or her comments directly to the reader. By doing so, it allows the author to move more freely within the story, give smaller bits of information at a time, and show what multiple characters are thinking within one scene of the novel. It also assists in Henry James's use of dramatic irony in the story by manipulating the tension that arises from the reader knowing of something that the character does not. Throughout the novel, James uses this point of view to cautiously scrutinize his characters' opinions and motivations all while creating suspense via the delicate struggle between good and evil.

This method of storytelling is an excellent literary maneuver for Henry James to utilize as it aids immensely in character development. *Washington Square* Characters Dr. Austin Sloper Doctor Austin Sloper is among Henry James' most complex characters. Surely, he treats his daughter, Catherine, harshly. But Dr. Sloper's clever mind and indeed perfect criticism of Catherine's suitor, Morris Townsend, make it difficult to write the doctor off as a simple villain. Throughout the novel, Dr. Sloper becomes a largely symbolic father figure. Even in his interactions with his two sisters, Lavinia Penniman and Elizabeth Almond, Dr. Sloper often neglects to thank these two (adult) individuals with their due respect. Dr. Sloper is a great man of society, a local figure in Washington Square. Because Dr. Sloper is so famous, because Dr. Sloper is so intelligent – and especially because Dr. Sloper knows both of these facts so well – the contrast between his depressions and troughs is significant. A famous doctor, Sloper

cannot save his wife or son from death once they take ill. And Sloper's name is of little use in convincing Catherine to obey his wishes. When it counts most – in his family – the doctor's skills are judged and are found wanting. Catherine Sloper Catherine is the heroine of the novel and for most of the novel, Catherine is surrounded by dominating individuals who seek to make decisions for her. As a young girl and even as a young woman, Catherine finds herself unable to live up to her father's paradigm of what a good daughter would be. It is not at all difficult for Catherine to be "good," but Dr. Sloper would prefer a daughter who was "clever" and for all of Aunt Penniman's instruction, Catherine has remained not-so-clever in her father's eyes. Washington Square Inciting Event: At a party, Catherine meets the charming and "beautiful," but poor and wasteful, Morris. This kicks off the main conflict of will-she-or-won't-she-marry-Morris? She starts out by rejecting the conflict in the sense that she immediately rejects the idea that Morris could possibly be interested in someone as plain and dull as herself. First Plot Point: Six weeks later, Morris asks Catherine to marry him. This fully immerses Catherine in the conflict: she wants to marry Morris, but her father believes Morris is a wastrel who is only after Catherine's inheritance. He adamantly opposes the match. The rest of the story is about the struggle between Catherine and her father, Dr. Sloper. The engagement brings Catherine out of her normal world of passive singleness and into her adventure world as a besieged lover. First Pinch Point: Dr. Sloper visits Morris's widowed sister—who financially supports Morris—and finally gets to her admit Catherine would be better off not marrying Morris. Even though, as it turns out, Morris is exactly what Dr. Sloper believes him to be, Dr. Sloper is the main antagonist in this story. He is the one who staunchly and sometimes cruelly stands between sweet, simple Catherine and what she wants—so it is only right that the Pinch Point should emphasize his power to thwart Catherine. Note how it also introduces new clues about Morris's character. Midpoint: Despite her dread of disappointing and disrespecting her father, Catherine finally allows Morris to pressure her into agreeing to a swift marriage. From this moment on, mousy Catherine slowly begins to take charge of her life. She makes the decision and sticks to it with all genuineness, both in the face of Morris's immediately hesitancy and her father's fury. Second Pinch Point: Dr. Sloper takes Catherine abroad for a year and ends by trying to frighten her by telling her he "is not a good man"—and instead ends by forever damaging her trust in him and their heretofore simple and loving relationship.