

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

The Turn of the Screw by Henry James

- After reading *The Turn of the Screw*, go back and reread the frame story (pages 1-6 in the edition we are using). Do you notice anything of significance in your second reading that escaped you before? How would your reading of the story be different if there were no frame story?
- *The Turn of the Screw* is often read in one of two opposing ways: as a straightforward story of ghosts menacing innocent children or as an account of the fantasies of a hysterical governess. Which reading of the novel seems more convincing to you and what is your evidence in support of it?
- According to Mrs. Grose, what was so objectionable about Peter Quint when he was alive? What happened between him and Miss Jessel?
- The governess says that the letter dismissing Miles from school “can have only one meaning” (p.10). What meaning does the governess assign to it and do you agree that this is the only meaning? Where else in the story do you see words or incidents that are subject to more than one meaning?
- What evidence does the governess assemble to convince herself that the ghosts are real? Does the evidence seem convincing to you?
- What are some possible meanings for the title of the story, *The Turn of the Screw*?



Skokie Public Library

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