

Student's Name

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Course

Date

NYC Washington Square

Washington Square is considered a fashionable neighborhood at the southern end of New York City's Manhattan. Additionally, Washington Square sits near the transition between the narrow streets. Moreover, it has the quaint names characteristic of an authentic colonial settlement. Washington Square is a carefully planned grid of streets and avenues with names in place of numbers above 4th street. The novel of the same name offers a vivid picture of the Sloper's house, which includes the front and the back part of the parlors. Additionally, it describes the doctor's library and the back of Catherine Sloper's bedroom, which is on the third floor. It also describes the bedroom of Lavinia Penniman on the same floor, at the front of the house. (James 1880). James employs contrasts in his novel to communicate the contrast between his central character, that is, Washington Square itself, and the city around it. The house seems to be attuned to Catherine, even if Dr. Sloper is the one who owns it. Catherine is portrayed in the novel as a large, sensitive, intelligent, shy, and sincere woman. Additionally, her calmness and steady character are the main focus of the novel.

There is a sharp contrast drawn between New York City and Washington Square as a whole. For example, the small house of Mrs. Montgomery, which is not nearly as grand as

Catherine's, is located several blocks east of it on Second Avenue. (James 1880). Mrs. Penniman meets Townsend in lower-class or desolate neighborhoods, at an oyster saloon on Seventh Avenue, west of Washington Square, as well at a street corner where they see vacant lots and unpaved streets. Mrs. Almond lives uptown on a developing street that has a number for its name. There is a notable change taking place in New York as it becomes increasingly busy. It is also evident in the novel that the old parts are being torn down, and new houses and businesses are springing up as new numbered streets are developed.

There is also a marked contrast between New York City and the United States, as the reader is induced to contemplate not only the busy world of New York surrounding the calm of Washington Square, but also given hints of the energies of the nation beyond the boundaries of the city. At one point, Townsend states that he will go to New Orleans in order to buy cotton, and later writes to Catherine after fleeing to Philadelphia. In addition, there is a contrast drawn between Europe and New York City. The Old World continent is present in the novel to serve two functions. Townsend has been to Paris and London, and knows some Spanish. Additionally, his wanderings eventually take him back to Europe. Later, Catherine learns that Townsend has married a European woman. The European scene also assists in bringing the conflict between Catherine and her father to a climax. (James 1880). Catherine is taken on a Grand Tour of Europe by Dr. Sloper to try and make her forget about Townsend. They travel around England and Switzerland, as well as Italy. James provides little information regarding specific places.

In *Washington Square*, Catherine Sloper is described as being dull despite having a brilliant father, Dr. Austin Sloper. Dr. Sloper is considered to be one of the best physicians in America. His skills are recognized by individuals in both social and professional circles, as well as by most of the famous men in New York, who are themselves characterized by their

knowledge and sophistication. Additionally, he is admired for having snagged one of the most coveted Manhattan debutantes, Catherine Harrington, who, as it happened, came with a substantial dowry, not that he cared, of course, since he "married for love."

In any case, the younger Catherine is one of the main characters. It is often stressed to the point of excess how ugly and ordinary she is. These somewhat negative attributes are mainly derived from others' perception of her. Another central character, Dr. Sloper, also plays a key role. He is noted for his use of irony, lack of sympathy, and sarcasm. (James 1880). Since he does not have compassion, it seems ironic that he considered such a trusted doctor. Morris Townsend is the last important player in the story, serving as Catherine's suitor and the undisputed anti-hero of the novel. The author portrays him as a golddigger only interested in the wealth Catherine inherited from her father. However, Catherine believes that he loves her.

The novel also includes Mrs. Almond, Catherine's aunt and the sister of Dr. Sloper and Mrs. Penniman. Among the aunts, Mrs. Almond is described as being the most sensible as well as the least romantic. Another character is Mrs. Montgomery, the sister of Morris Townsend who plays a minor role in the novel. She is depicted as a widow with little income who, low economic status notwithstanding, is able to maintain a modest and clean home. Her brother frequently borrows money from her while also acting as a tutor, teaching her five children Spanish as a means of earning his keep (James 1880). When Dr. Sloper visits Mrs. Montgomery, the latter reveals her belief that Morris should not marry Catherine. The last character in the novel is Mrs. Penniman, who is the sister of the doctor and Mrs. Almond and the aunt of Catherine. She is portrayed as romantic and meddlesome, and her notions of romantic love assist in driving the plot.

Overall, the novel *Washington Square* has very distinct character relationships. Although most of the novel explores Catherine's character arc and her potential engagement to Morris Townsend, it is evident that the storyline also makes Dr. Sloper a central character, since he is so strongly against their relationship, going so far as to threaten Catherine with disinheritance should she marry Townsend. *Washington Square* is considered to be an excellent read for anyone who wants to ponder some of life's big questions in regards to love and relationships. It could be described as a very modern novel with a multitude of questions without answers, which is exactly right. The plot of the novel is relatively simple, and it is easy to follow. The novelist employs natural language, which is not difficult to understand.

Work Cited

James, Henry. *Washington Square: 1880*. Infomotions, Incorporated, 1880.