



# Washington Square (Oxford World's Classics)

*Henry James*

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'She will do as I have bidden her.'

Catherine Sloper is heiress to a fortune and the social eminence associated with Washington Square. She attracts the attention of a good-looking but penniless young man, Morris Townsend. His suit is encouraged by Catherine's romantically-minded aunt, Mrs Penniman, but her father, a clever physician, is convinced that his motives are merely mercenary. He will not consent to the marriage, regardless of the cost to his daughter. Out of this classic confrontation Henry James fashioned one of his most deftly searching shorter fictions. First published in 1880 but set some forty years earlier in a pre-Civil War New York, the novel reflects ironically on the restricted world in which its heroine is marooned, seating herself at its close 'for life, as it were'.

In his introduction Adrian Poole reflects on the book's gestation and influences, the significance of place, and the insight with which the four principal players are drawn. The edition includes an account of the real-life tale that sparked James's imaginative genius.

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