

Summary of Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*

Summary

Published in 1881, *The Portrait of a Lady* follows Isabel Archer, a spirited and independent young American woman who travels to Europe to explore life and expand her horizons. Isabel inherits a large fortune, which attracts the attention of manipulative individuals like Gilbert Osmond, whom she marries despite warnings from friends. The novel delves into themes of freedom, choice, and the constraints of societal expectations, as Isabel struggles with the consequences of her decisions and seeks to assert her individuality.

Important Facts

1. The novel is considered one of Henry James' masterpieces, showcasing his psychological insight and narrative complexity.
2. It employs a third-person omniscient narrator, allowing readers to delve deeply into the characters' thoughts and motivations.
3. The story contrasts American optimism and European sophistication, a recurring theme in James' works.