CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Golden Bowl

Henry James · *1904 · original English text*

The Prince, Amerigo, has always liked his London. He marries Maggie Verver; his former love, Charlotte Stant, marries Maggie's father. A golden bowl, beautiful and already cracked, becomes the figure of a marriage that must be seen and mended. The hosted text is James's original English, Project Gutenberg #4264, Volumes I and II complete.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What can a daughter and wife do when she comes to see that the beautiful arrangement of two marriages has been built over a crack, and how should a student read a novel of knowledge, patience, and a flawed bowl?

"The Prince had always liked his London, when it had come to him; he was one of the modern Romans who find by the Thames a more convincing image of the truth of the ancient state than any they have left by the Tiber."

Book First, Part First, I

The book is in two large movements: the Prince, then the Princess. Knowledge comes late and at a cost. The golden bowl is a real object in a shop, and a figure for a flawed whole. Teach the seeing, the patience, and the danger of a beautiful arrangement that is not true. For older students (11–12); a story of marriage and betrayal, taught with tact.

KEY CHARACTERS

Prince Amerigo
The modern Roman who likes his London, and whose marriage opens the book

Maggie Verver
The American daughter and wife who, in the second half, comes to knowledge

Charlotte Stant
Maggie's friend, later Adam's wife, and the Prince's former love

Adam Verver
Maggie's father, the collector, whose second marriage completes the dangerous arrangement

Fanny Assingham
The knowing friend who watches the four, and has a part in what they know

A CITY, AND A FLAWED BOWL

> *"The Prince had always liked his London, when it had come to him; he was one of the modern Romans who find by the Thames a more convincing image of the truth of the ancient state than any they have left by the Tiber."*
>
> Book First, I

Grades 11–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

The Prince Had Always Liked His London

BOOK FIRST, OPENING

Amerigo, a modern Roman, finds in London a more convincing image of empire than in contemporary Rome. The book opens on the eve of his marriage to Maggie Verver.

- The first sentence is exact, including "when it had come to him" and the Thames and the Tiber
- His name among his relations is Amerigo
- Maggie Verver, the American heiress, is already in view
- This is Book First: The Prince, in the complete two-volume file, PG #4264

> *"The Prince had always liked his London, when it had come to him; he was one of the modern Romans who find by the Thames a more convincing image of the truth of the ancient state than any they have left by the Tiber."*
>
> Book First, I

02

Two Marriages

BOOK FIRST, THE ARRANGEMENTS

Maggie marries the Prince; Charlotte Stant, Maggie's friend and the Prince's former love, is later married to Maggie's widowed father, Adam Verver. The four lives close in together.

- Adam Verver is a collector, of art and of a son-in-law; that habit is part of the book's moral question
- Charlotte's marriage looks like a solution; it is also a proximity
- The early books are social comedy with a fault already under the floor
- Keep James's names: Amerigo, Maggie Verver, Charlotte Stant, Adam Verver

03

The Bowl

THE SHOP, AND THE OBJECT

In a shop, a golden bowl is offered—beautiful, and possibly cut from a single crystal, and already flawed. Charlotte sets it down; the question of the crack will return.

- The bowl is a real purchase in the story, not only a title
- The dialogue about whether it is a single crystal, and what that would mean, belongs to this scene
- A gift with a flaw is the book's figure for a life that looks whole
- Do not treat the object as a mere symbol and forget the shop

04

The Princess Knows

BOOK SECOND

Maggie comes to knowledge. The second half of the novel is her seeing, her patience, and her effort to mend the marriages without a public wreck.

- Book Second is The Princess; the point of view turns
- Knowledge here is a burden and a work, not a triumph only
- Teach the betrayal with tact; this is a book of marriage, not a scandal sheet
- The close is a hard peace, not a simple exposure

05

Volumes I and II, Complete

THE HOSTED FILE

Project Gutenberg #4264, The Golden Bowl, Volumes I and II, complete, original English, 1904.

- The file contains both volumes; do not stop at the end of The Prince
- For older students (11–12)
- It may be read with The Ambassadors and The Portrait of a Lady as late James
- Quote the hosted wording, including "judgement" if it appears, and the English "crystal" of the bowl

Marriage and Knowledge · A Flawed Whole · Money and Collection · Patience · Friendship and Betrayal · America and Europe

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. The opening is exact: "The Prince had always liked his London, when it had come to him; he was one of the modern Romans who find by the Thames a more convincing image of the truth of the ancient state than any they have left by the Tiber."
2. The hosted text is the complete Golden Bowl, Volumes I and II, PG #4264, original English, 1904. Do not stop at Book First.
3. The golden bowl is a shop object with a crack, and a figure for a beautiful arrangement that is not true. Keep both.
4. The second half is Maggie's knowledge and patience. Teach the betrayal with tact, for older students (11–12).
5. This is late James: slow, interior, and morally exacting. Help a student watch for the seeing, not only for the plot of the four.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #4264, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/james-the-golden-bowl/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.