

Washington Square

Henry James

What does 'admirable old maid' conceal about the costs of Catherine's self-sufficient life?

TOTAL TIME

PASSAGE

30 minutes	The admirable old maid
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FIND THE ANCHOR TEXT

Use the Anchor Text Table of Contents in the Enhanced Reader to open the START anchor. Then use the dropdown to select the END anchor.

SECTION / LOCATION	Chapter XXXII
START	Catherine, however, became an admirable old maid.
END	There was something dead in her life, and her duty was to try and fill the void.
PASSAGE ID	sec-ws-04

THE MOVE

Read a narrator's label against the private history beneath it

WHY THIS PASSAGE

Calling Catherine an 'admirable old maid' describes the competent life visible from outside, but the narration also preserves the losses, betrayals, and emotional deadness beneath that social success. The label is true and insufficient.

MARK

Underline the qualities that make Catherine publicly admirable. Circle the private losses or absences the narrator records. Star the sentence that most sharply exposes the gap between the label and the lived cost.

NOTICE

- What does the phrase 'admirable old maid' allow an observer to see?
- What parts of Catherine's history disappear inside that neat label?
- How can a narrator use a socially positive label while still asking the reader to question its completeness?

THINK

Answer provisionally: What does 'admirable old maid' conceal about the costs of Catherine's self-sufficient life? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response to: What does 'admirable old maid' conceal about the costs of Catherine's self-sufficient life? Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and explain why.

STRONG ANSWER	The phrase 'admirable old maid' captures Catherine's competence and dignity but conceals the betrayals, lost love, and emotional deadening underneath that public identity. The label is accurate and incomplete.
EVIDENCE	Use qualities that make her admirable and private history the social label does not reveal.
WATCH FOR	Do not argue the narrator is simply mocking the label. The tension comes from a positive description that cannot contain the full cost.
SOLO	Read the exact passage independently.
SUPPORTED	Use narration and sentence highlighting while reading the same passage.
LISTENING	Listen to the exact passage; visual following is optional. Same question and evidence demand.

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What does 'admirable old maid' conceal about the costs of Catherine's self-sufficient life?

START ANCHOR	Catherine, however, became an admirable old maid.
END ANCHOR	There was something dead in her life, and her duty was to try and fill the void.

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OPEN THE MARKED PASSAGE IN TUMBLELIT

SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration + highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the exact passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. MARK - Underline the qualities that make Catherine publicly admirable. Circle the private losses or absences the narrator records. Star the sentence that most sharply exposes the gap between the label and the lived cost.
2. NOTICE - What does the phrase 'admirable old maid' allow an observer to see? What parts of Catherine's history disappear inside that neat label? How can a narrator use a socially positive label while still asking the reader to question its completeness?
3. THINK - Answer provisionally: What does 'admirable old maid' conceal about the costs of Catherine's self-sufficient life?
4. WRITE - Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.

Use evidence from the assigned passage. Show what you noticed and how the text supports your interpretation.