

Questions on *Roman Fever* by Edith Wharton:

1. What are the first hints of submerged conflict between Mrs. Slade and Mrs. Ansley? What details in part 1 bring out the differences in their personalities and their lives? How has their relationship changed by the end, and how do the last six paragraphs of the story show the change?
2. Discuss how dramatic irony plays out in *Roman Fever*. What is the full story that neither Mrs. Slade nor Mrs. Ansley knows? What prompts the two ladies to reveal what they know to each other?
3. In part 2, Mrs. Slade remembers how earlier generations tried to protect their daughters in Rome. What are the similarities and differences between the older women's memories and the daughter's current experiences of courtship in Italy?
4. You've read several pages of the story before you learn the two women's first names, Alida Slade and Grace Ansley. Why do you think Edith Wharton waited so long to tell you their first names? What does the formality of using last names tell you about the two women?
5. How could two women who have known each other of so long know each other so little?
6. What is the relationship between Aunt Harriet's story and the story of Mrs. Slade and Mrs. Ansley when they were young in Rome?
7. What do you think the young Alida meant to happen, both physically and emotionally, to Grace when she sent her the false note to meet Delphin in the Colosseum? What did happen to Grace? Why do you think Alida did it?
8. The flaw in Alida's plan was her failure to anticipate that Grace would answer the false note from Delphin and that he, in return, would respond. How could she have overlooked such an obvious action?
9. As you look back over the story, what clues along the way lead you to believe that Barbara is Delphin Slade's daughter?