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| James, Henry (1843–1916) |
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| One of the major literary figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Henry James was one of the foremost English-language practitioners of literary realism at its height, and was one of the most influential novelists among the modernists that followed him, receiving praise and admiration from T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad and others. His novel *Portrait of A Lady* and novellas *Daisy Miller* and *The Turn of the Screw* are among his most widely read, and in *The Spoils of Poynton* he made some of the first forays into the complexity and depth that would later characterize modernism. Also an accomplished travel writer and memoirist, James's produced literary criticism that is considered some of the most detailed and deep work on theorizing the English-language novel before the twentieth century. Born in the United States and spending much of his adult life in Britain, James is a transatlantic figure whose influence has been so great as to posthumously justify his nickname of Master. |
| Summary  One of the major literary figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Henry James was one of the foremost English-language practitioners of literary realism at its height, and was one of the most influential novelists among the modernists that followed him, receiving praise and admiration from T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad and others. His novel *Portrait of A Lady* and novellas *Daisy Miller* and *The Turn of the Screw* are among his most widely read, and in *The Spoils of Poynton* he made some of the first forays into the complexity and depth that would later characterize modernism. Also an accomplished travel writer and memoirist, James's prodcued literary criticism that is considered some of the most detailed and deep work on theorizing the English-language novel before the twentieth century. Born in the United States and spending much of his adult life in Britain, James is a transatlantic figure whose influence has been so great as to posthumously justify his nickname of Master. Main Entry Born 15 April, 1843 in New York City to Henry James, Sr. and Mary Robertson, Henry James was the second of five children and the most renowned member of a literary family. His eldest brother was the prominent and influential psychologist William James, and his youngest sibling and only sister was the diarist Alice James. Henry James, Sr. was himself an anti-establishment Swedenborgian theologian and writer whose philosophy – and fortune – created a unique environment for the James children. Living first in Albany, NY and then returning to New York City, the younger Henry wasn't formally educated in schools but rather was schooled by a series of tutors and informal educators.  File: HenryJames.jpg  Figure 1 Henry James  Source: <http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/arch/175/images/jamesL.jpg>  After several years in New York City, the James family traveled Europe from 1855 to 1858, and the young James was exposed to Geneva, London, Paris and Bonn. The attraction and appeal of Europe, and the rootless liberal cosmopolitanism of those years, stayed with him his entire life. James's cosmopolitanism was largely literary and was complemented by his ability to speak French, Italian and German, as well as his familiarity with Russian literature in translation. After returning from Europe, the James family lived in Newport, Rhode Island up to and during the Civil War, in which Henry was unable to serve due to a back injury sustained while fighting a fire.    It was in Newport that James first began writing; he befriended the young artist John La Farge, who introduced him to the work of Flaubert and other writers La Farge knew from his time in Paris. James was particularly influenced by Balzac and Merimee, and his first attempt at published literary work was an English translation of a play by the latter. His translation was rejected, but by February 1864, James's first story, “A Tragedy of Error,” was published anonymously in *The Continental Monthly.* The precision and refinement of technique demonstrated in the story echoed the French literature with which James had been engaging and foreshadowed the style of his later work.    Later in 1864, James was brought back into the literary sphere of the United States when he and his family moved to Boston. He immediately immersed himself in the growing literary periodical scene in the city and produced a number of book reviews along with his first signed and published short stories. Even after the family relocated (for the final time) to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1866, James continued to move in the same circles, networking with Longfellow, J.R. Lowell and others. His stories during this period, such as “The Story of a Year,” evinced a continued growth in style, but were, largely by virtue of their length, limited compared to his quintessential mature work.    James moved to Britain in 1867, feeling that the grand moral project of New England – the abolition of slavery – was complete, and that the cultural superiority of the Old World would suit him and his writing better. He toured England, staying at Oxford, and met many of the nation's scientific and cultural leaders, including Charles Darwin, George Eliot, John Ruskin, William Morris, the Rossettis and others. He then toured the continent, spending less time with famous figures and more time with famous landscapes, architecture, and art.    His travels through Europe inspired his first stories set in Europe, which were serialized in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1871, and comprised his first novella, entitled *The Passionate Pilgrim*. The novella balanced American identity with the desire to enter European cultural discourse and evinces James's early adoption of the spectator role extolled by Matthew Arnold – perceptive, objective, disinterested and pleasureless.    Upon his return to Boston in 1870, James wrote his next short novel, *Watch and Ward*, derived from the Pygmalion myth, which he found initially disappointing. He was unimpressed with it and neglected to revise it for publication until 1878, after the serialization in 1875 of *Roderick Hudson.* The novel (the first full-length novel by James) was published in its entirety in 1879 after meeting the approval of Turgenev and Matthew Arnold.    James then spent two years living in Paris as a reviewer for the New York Tribune and met Flaubert, Daudet and Zola; he was, however, unimpressed with the mores of some of them, and this discomfort made its way into *The American*, which was serialized in 1876. That year, he moved to London and immersed himself in its society – this period produced some of his most well-known works: the novels *The Europeans* (1878), *Washington Square* (1880) and *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), and his most popular work, the novella *Daisy Miller* (1878), which owed its popularity to the sensation created by its portrayal of its flirtatious eponymous character.    James's social life was enlivened by his success; he also felt that the role of a bachelor was to help set a refined tone in society. His lifelong bachelorhood has led to speculation over his sexuality, but there is not evidence for anything other than a steadfast commitment to the disinterested spectator role afforded by bachelorhood and participation in normal homosocial bonds.    After returning to the United States from 1881 to 1883 to spend time with his siblings and attend the funerals of his parents, James returned to London and remained in Europe for over two decades. The first few years of this period produced sweeping realist novels, as exemplified by *The Bostonians* (1886), *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) and *The Tragic Muse* (1890).    By the 1890s, however, James began to believe that his realist style was growing outdated and saw the modernization of daily life and the world at large as changing the way writing should reflect the world. *The Spoils of Poynton* (1896) reflected this new outlook and drew praise for its progressive mix of density, narrative ambiguity and interpretative richness and, along with the ghost story *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), helped establish James as the Master that he came to be known as.    As the nineteenth century drew to a close, James went on a foray into drama, which was largely a critical failure: James's immersive, elegant and subtle style did not, it was said, lend itself well to the stage. Similarly, James's later work, including what he called his most accomplished novel, *The Ambassadors* (1903) and the successful (particularly in the United States after his lecture tour there) *The Golden Bowl* (1904), grew increasingly sprawling and were not as well received as the novels that preceded them.    James sought then to solidify his legacy with a collection of his fiction, and articulated his style choices in the prefaces to the 24 volumes of *The New York Edition* (1909) of his collected fiction, in which he explains in detail his decisions on how to approach consciousness, narrative style, character relationships, plot development and numerous other aspects of fiction. The prefaces to *The New York Edition* served, like the collection did for his fiction, as a capstone to a career's worth of literary criticism.    Late in life, James took on the role of literary elder statesman, corresponding with younger writers and offering his wisdom. Though much of his advice to younger writers was negative, he did encourage the work of the Bloomsbury Group and spent time with Rupert Brooke in Cambridge in 1909.    James's work progress slowed after the turn of the decade, and he devoted himself to the home front of the war effort as World War I began by visiting wounded soldiers in hospitals around England. In order to avoid the inconvenience of being an alien during wartime, he became a naturalized British subject in 1915. Later that year, he suffered a stroke and eventually died on February 28, 1916 in London. He was buried alongside his parents in Cambridge, Massachusetts. List of Major WorksCollections The Complete Notebooks of Henry James (1988)  Henry James: A Life in Letters (2001)  The New York Edition (1909) Novels *Roderick Hudson* (1875)  *The American* (1877)  *The Europeans* (1878)  *Confidence* (1879)  *Washington Square* (1880)  *Portrait of a Lady* (1881)  *The Bostonians* (1886)  *The Princess Casamassima* (1886)  *The Reverberator* (1888)  *The Tragic Muse* (1890)  *The Other House* (1896)  *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897)  *What Masie Knew* (1897)  *The Awkward Age* (1899)  *The Sacred Fount* (1901)  *The Wings of the Dove* (1902)  *The Ambassadors* (1903)  *The Golden Bowl* (1904)  *The Whole Family* (1908)  *The Outcry* (1911)  *The Ivory Tower* (1917)  *The Sense of the Past* (1917) Novellas *Watch and Ward* (1871)  *Daisy Miller* (1878)  *The Asper Papers* (1888)  *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)  *The Beast in the Jungle* (1903) Short Story Collections *Henry James: Complete Stories 1874-1884* (1999)  *Henry James: Complete Stories 1884-1891* (1999)  *Henry James: Complete Stories 1898-1910* (1996) Drama *Theatricals* (1894)  *Theatricals: Second Series* (1895)  *Guy Domville* (1895) Criticism *French Poets and Novelists* (1878)  *Hawthorne* (1879)  *A Little Tour in France* (1884)  *Partial Portraits* (1888)  *Essays in London and Elsewhere* (1893)  *Picture and Text* (1893)  *Notes on Novelists* (1914) Biography *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* (1903) Travel Writing *English Hours* (1905)  *The American Scene* (1907)  *Italian Hours* (1909)  *Henry James: Collected Travel Writings* (1993) Memoirs *A Small Boy and Others* (1913)  *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914)  *The Middle Years* (1917) |
| Further reading:  (Bellringer)  (Edel)  (Fogel)  (Graham)  (Toibin) |