James, Henry (1843 – 1916)

US novelist, brother of William James. James settled (1876) in England and became a British subject in 1915. His early masterpiece *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) contrasts the values of American and European society. The novels of his middle period, such as *The Bostonians* (1886), deal with political themes. His final novels, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) show his mastery of the psychological novel. Other works include *The Turn of the Screw* (1898).

1843–1916, American novelist and critic, b. New York City. A master of the psychological novel, James was an innovator in technique and one of the most distinctive prose stylists in English. He was the son of Henry James, Sr., a Swedenborgian theologian, and the brother of William James, the philosopher. Educated privately by tutors in Europe and the United States, he entered Harvard law school in 1862. Encouraged by William Dean Howells and other members of the Cambridge literary circle in the 1860s, James wrote critical articles and reviews for the *Atlantic Monthly*, a periodical in which several of his novels later appeared in serial form. He made several trips to Europe, and while there he became associated with such notable literary figures as Turgenev and Flaubert. In 1876 he settled permanently in London and became a British subject in 1915.

James devoted himself to literature and travel, gradually assuming the role of detached spectator and analyst of life. In his early novels, including *Roderick Hudson* (1876), *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), as well as some of his later work, James contrasts the sophisticated, though somewhat staid, Europeans with the innocent, eager, though often brash, Americans. In the novels of his middle period, *The Bostonians* (1886), *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), and *The Tragic Muse* (1890), he turned his attention from the international theme to reformers, revolutionaries, and political aspirants.

During and after an unsuccessful six-year attempt (1889–95) to win recognition as a playwright, James wrote a series of short, powerful novels, including *The Aspern Papers* (1888), *What Maisie Knew* (1897), *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), and *The Sacred Fount* (1901). In his last and perhaps his greatest novels, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904), all marked by a return to the international theme, James reached his highest development in the portrayal of the intricate subtleties of character and in the use of a complex, convoluted style to express delicate nuances of thought.

Perhaps more than any previous writer, James refined the technique of narrating a novel from the point of view of a character, thereby laying the foundations of modern stream of consciousness fiction. The series of critical prefaces he wrote for the reissue of his novels (beginning in 1907) won him a reputation as a superb technician. He is also famous for his finely wrought short stories, including “The Beast in the Jungle” and “The Real Thing,” which are masterpieces of the genre. In addition to fiction and literary criticism, James wrote several books on travel and three autobiographical works. He never married.
Bibliography

See his plays, ed. by L. Edel (1949);
his travel writings, ed. by R. Howard (2 vol., 1993);
his complete letters, ed. by P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias (3 vol., 2009-11) and.
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(1999), and S. M. Novick (2 vol., 1996-2007);
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