

Henry James

1843-1916



1843

- **Henry James is born**

Henry James Jr. is born at **Washington Square** in Manhattan on **April 15**, the second son of Henry and Mary James. His father is an eccentric, WEALTHY philosopher

The James family moves to Europe

In October the James family makes their first move to Europe, living in both England and France. While in England, Henry Sr. suffers a nervous breakdown.



Washington Square, New York

- **1845 The James family returns to America**

After a two-year stay in Europe, the Jameses move to Albany, New York. This year marks the beginning of a 10-year stay in America, Henry Jr.'s longest consecutive residence in his native land.

- **Two years later the James family moves to New York City**

The family moves into a fashionable home on W. 14th Street which they hope will be their permanent residence. Henry will remember this home as the family's most settled. His education, on the other hand, is anything but.

- **1855: The James family returns to Europe**
The family moves to Switzerland in August. After only two months of living in Geneva, the family resettles in Paris, then London, the move motivated by Henry Sr.'s disappointment in the Swiss schools. In London the children are instructed by tutors.
- **1856: The James family settles in Paris**
Henry Sr. wants the children to improve their French, so the family returns to Paris. During the two-year stay, Henry Sr. idealizes his home country. Charles Dickens is the Jameses's neighbor on the Champs-Élysées, but they never meet him.



Henry James as a young man

- **1858: The Jameses move to Rhode Island**
Attracted by its genteel wealth, Henry Sr. chooses Newport as his family's new home. William and Henry love Newport and do not want to return to Europe. For the first time Henry Jr. feels a sense of belonging.
- **1859: The James family returns to Geneva**
Distressed by his sons' desire to attend college, and by the American "characteristics of extravagance and insubordination" which he fears they are adopting, Henry Sr. decides to move his family back to Europe. William is openly disgusted, Henry internally so.
- **James goes to a polytechnic school**
Although previously dissatisfied by Swiss schools, Henry Sr. now enrolls Henry Jr. at the Institution Rochette, a polytechnic school for aspiring engineers. Henry hates it and longs to be back in Newport.

- **1860: Henry Sr. moves back to America for good**
the Jameses return to Newport so that William can study painting under William Morris Hunt.

James befriends Mary "Minny" Temple

Reuniting with his six orphaned Temple cousins, Henry begins to spend time with his favorite, **17-year-old Minny:**

"In a world in which women were predictably conditioned into narrow roles, Minny had managed by sheer force of personality to be exceptional."

- **1862: James goes to law school**

Henry is eager to do something during the Civil War other than be "just literary." Surprisingly, his father allows him to enroll in Harvard Law School. Law doesn't grip him, though, and he decides to become a full-time writer.

- **1864: First short story**

'A tragedy of Error' published anonymously in *Continental Monthly*

- **1869: James goes to Europe alone**

After William returns from his 18-month stay abroad, Henry travels to Europe, also to cure his "elusive ills." In London he gains entry into artistic circles, socializing with Leslie Stephen (Virginia Woolf's father), the socialist artist William Morris, and the painter Gabriele Rossetti.

James meets George Eliot

In May Henry meets his revered George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans). He considers her the only English novelist "to have powers of thought at all commensurate with [her] powers of imagination." George Eliot is also a favorite of Minny Temple's.

- **1870: Minny Temple dies of tuberculosis**



On March 8 Minny Temple dies of tuberculosis. She will serve as the model for many of Henry's fictional heroines, most notably Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*.

- **1882:** Death of his mother in January, and death of his father in December.

1886

- **James takes a permanent home**

After an adulthood of wandering, Henry signs a 21-year lease on a large flat at 34 De Vere Gardens, Kensington, London. "It is an anchorage for life," he says.

1894: James visits **Venice**, where his dear friend **Constance Fenimore Woolson** has just killed herself

- **James moves to Rye**

Weary of constant travel, but not wanting to stay in London year round, Henry leases and then buys Lamb House in quiet Rye, England. This will be his home for the rest of his life.

America, again

- **1904:**
- **James returns to America**
For the first time in 20 years, Henry sails to America for a lecture tour with much trepidation. He finds America nearly unrecognizable, a new, technological world. He spends most of his time visiting Edith Wharton and William.

James visits the family graves

In November, Henry visits the graves of his parents and sister for the first time. This is what he considered the mission of his trip.

- **1910:** depression
- Death of his beloved brother, the philosopher and psychologist **William James** [**'Stream of Consciousness'**]

1913:

James sits for Sargent

To commemorate Henry's 70th birthday, longtime friend **John Singer Sargent** paints a large-scale oil portrait of him. Henry is delighted by the tribute.



- **1915: James becomes a British citizen**

On July 28, disgusted that the United States hasn't joined the Anglo-French cause, Henry James becomes a British citizen.

- **1916:** After suffering some strokes, on February 28, Henry James dies.

- ‘The American going to Europe and experiencing the clash between the American identity and the European origin, the American materialism and the European culturalism, the American vulgarity and the European sophistication and, also, the American dynamics and the European petrification’ (1)

Erik Larsen

‘Identity and Otherness in Two Texts by Henry James’

The American v. the European

- **Innocence**
- **Spontaneity**
- **Knowledge**
- **Experience**
- **Form/Rituals**
- **Ceremony**

‘Daisy Miller: a study’

- Published in the summer of **1878** as a magazine serial in the *Cornhill* (June and July issues)
- Successful on both sides of the Atlantic! It was a bestseller

CHAPTER XXVII.

I CHARGE YOU, DROP YOUR DAGGERS!



GENERAL BAYNES began the story which you and I have heard at length. He told it in his own way. He grew very angry with himself whilst defending himself. He had to abuse Philip very fiercely, in order to excuse his own act of treason. He had to show that his act was not his act; that, after all, he never had promised; and that, if he had promised, Philip's atrocious conduct ought to absolve him from any previous promise. I do not

wonder that the general was abusive, and out of temper. Such a crime as he was committing can't be performed cheerfully by a man who is

The Cornhill

The setting



- Hotel 'Trois Couronnes' in Vevey...



- and Rome...



The subtitle: **a study**

- Term drawn from the visual arts?
- ‘a careful preliminary sketch for a work of art’ (quoted in David Lodge p. xxvi)
- ‘an artist’s pictorial record of his observation of some subject, incident, or effect [...] intended for his own guidance in his subsequent work’ (ibid.)
- According to Leon Edel ‘he had written the equivalent of a pencil sketch on an artist’s pad rather than a rounded character’ (ibid.)

- ***The Gilded Age***: 'American 's golden road to fortune'. See Mark Twain's novel (1873)
- Theodore Veblen *The Theory of the Leisure Class: an Economic Study of Institutions* (1899)
- Veblen's theory of CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION : 'social practices serving no purpose other than to display one's wealth and distance from productive labor' (M. Baumann, New York University)

American travelers in Europe ...

- The Myth of the **Grand Tour** (Italy and its classical heritage), upper-middle class Americans
- Social significance of **TOURISM**: viewed as a social activity for the wealthy (travelling in the industrial age)
- **TOURISM** as a form of social validation

“one might enumerate the items of high civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left.. No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools--no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class--no Epsom nor Ascot! Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life--especially in the American life of forty years ago, the effect of which, upon an English or a French imagination, would probably as a general thing be appalling. The natural remark, in the almost lurid light of such an indictment, would be that if these things are left out, everything is left out. The American knows that a good deal remains; what it is that remains--that is his secret, his joke, as one may say. It would be cruel, in this terrible denudation, to deny him the consolation of his national gift, that "American humour" of which of late years we have heard so much”.

Henry James *Hawthorne*