



The Art of the Novel

Henry James , R.P. Blackmur (Introduction)

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This collection of prefaces, originally written for the 1909 multi-volume New York Edition of Henry James's fiction, first appeared in book form in 1934 with an introduction by poet and critic R. P. Blackmur. In his prefaces, James tackles the great problems of fiction writing :character, plot, point of view, inspiration;and explains how he came to write novels such as *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The American*. As Blackmur puts it, "criticism has never been more ambitious, nor more useful."

As a guide not only to James's inspiration and execution, but also to his frustrations and triumphs, this volume will be valuable both to students of his fiction and to aspiring writers.

The Art of the Novel Details

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From Reader Review The Art of the Novel for online ebook

J.L. Flores says

Preciosamente escrito, Henry James tiene una de las plumas más elegantes de su época y probablemente en la historia de la literatura. No es un libro para seguir a pies juntillas, ¿pero cuál lo es?

Es un disfrute ver navegar a James en este mar noveloso y sacarle un brillo trascendente.

Ke says

A fan of Henry James may find this collection amazing, but a lesser fan may not find that her previous views on the author will shift.

Tom Walsh says

if you are a fan of James, then this one is a critical read. it contains all his famous preface statements for all his novels.

Clara says

I admit it. I like Henry James's fiction. Maybe it's because I came to it as an adult and it wasn't forced upon me as a teenager--how can a teenager understand Henry James anyway? This was, however, the first piece of criticism by James that I've read. *The Art of the Novel* is a compilation of the prefaces to each of the works that appeared in the "New York Edition" of James's fiction. The New York Edition was a fancy set of all of James's novels and selected short pieces, about which he was very pleased. He used its publication as an opportunity to revise several of his novels, some more and some less so. Having recently read a wonderful book, part biography, part history of the revision of *The Portrait of a Lady* for this edition, I decided to tackle the prefaces. Bad idea.

It was a slog. Why I didn't cut my losses early on is a testament to my appreciation for James. The book is a perfect example both of how style can be particular to a period and of James at his most obtuse and unattractive. It seems impossible for James to say anything simply and clearly in these prefaces. I felt alternately frustrated and bored (sometimes both at once) reading *The Art of the Novel*, which is how some people say they feel when they read James's fiction. I've never had that experience with his novels or short stories, whose style and syntax I only occasionally find cumbersome, but now I think I understand.

Charles says

Fundamental. Together with Ford and Conrad, the founders of modern Literary Realism.
