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Henry James

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Henry James : The ambassadors. before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The ambassadors.:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Discrete informationBy Lynnora BierceIt's nice to be able to easily pick up a classic book like this one discretely. So one may read it's contents after hearing it referenced by a colleague. I have yet to run into that colleague again to discuss the contents of said "classic", but I'm ready. Bring it. saves me yet again from my last quarter of the twentieth century somewhat shoddy education.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. OutstandingBy B. PeppardA seriously great piece of literature. Not always an easy read for me, as some of the references and allusions were either too dated for me or outside of my range of knowledge. In the end, though, it's easy to see why Henry James loved this novel best of all the ones he wrote. Highly recommend to any HJ fans, and to Louisa May Alcott and Jane Austin fans as well.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to."By Matthew KingoreWhile Henry James' favorite of his own novels, The Ambassadors (1903), in my opinion as well as E.M. Forster's, doesn't quiet live up to the genius of The Wings of the Dove (1902) or even the earlier The Portrait of a Lady (1881). The familiar James themes are all there--the American abroad, American reactions to European culture, exploration of the terrain of the life unlived--but missing is the truly ecstatic prose and characters with remarkable psychological depth that distinguish the finest of James' works.The narrative follows "ambassador" Lambert Strether to Paris in pursuit of his widowed fiance, Mrs. Newsome's, son Chad--whom she believes to be romantically involved with an undesirable woman. Strether's mission is to extricate the wayward youth and return with him to Massachusetts directly. Once in Paris, however, Strether falls under the spell of

the city and finds Chad refined rather than corrupted by its influence and that of his charming companion, Madame de Vionnet. The summer wears on with little correspondence between Strether and the Newsomes waiting at home. Impatient to see her son returned and suitably married, Mrs. Newsome sends yet another envoy, Chad's cynical sister Sarah Pocock, to confront the errant Chad and a Strether whose view of the world has changed profoundly. In the end, it is Strether who prevents Chad from returning to America. The highlight of the text is certainly Strether's speech to Chad's friend Little Bilham in Book Fifth, in which he gives voice to his new sense of things: "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what have you had? Do what you like so long as you don't make my mistake. For it was a mistake. Live!" It is an expanded vision of life, an affirmation that seems an appealing climax to Strether's confrontation with the realities of his circumstance. The sentiments of Strether's speech, however, are tested in the remaining two-thirds of the narrative.