



The Portrait of a Lady (Barnes & Noble Classics)

Henry James

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Widely regarded as **Henry James**'s greatest masterpiece, *The Portrait of a Lady* features one of the author's most magnificent heroines: Isabel Archer, a beautiful, spirited American who becomes a victim of her provincialism during her travels in Europe.

As the story begins, Isabel, resolved to determine her own fate, has turned down two eligible suitors. Her cousin, who is dying of tuberculosis, secretly gives her an inheritance so that she can remain independent and fulfill a grand destiny, but the fortune only leads her to make a tragic choice and marry Gilbert Osmond, an American expatriate who lives in Florence. Outwardly charming and cultivated, but fundamentally cold and cruel, Osmond only brings heartbreak and ruin to Isabel's life. Yet she survives as she begins to realize that true freedom means living with her choices and their consequences.

Richly complex and nearly aesthetically perfect, *The Portrait of a Lady* brilliantly portrays the clash between the innocence and exuberance of the New World and the corruption and wisdom of the Old.

Gabriel Brownstein is the author of a collection of stories—*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, Apt 3W*—which won the 2002 PEN/Hemingway Award. His essays, reviews, and criticism have appeared in the *Boston Globe*, the *New Leader*, *Scribner's British Writers*, and on Nerve.com.

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