



# The Prefaces of Henry James: Framing the Modern Reader

*John H. Pearson*

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The first decade of the twentieth century saw Henry James at work selecting and revising his novels and tales for a collection of his work known as the New York Edition. James not only made extensive revisions of his early works; he added eighteen prefaces that provide what many readers believe to be the best commentary on his fiction. John Pearson argues here for a reading of the prefaces within the context of the New York Edition as James's attempt to construct an ideal reader, one attentive to his art and authorial performance. He argues that James sought to create the modern reader, one who would learn to appreciate and discriminate his literary art through reading the prefaces. Through close readings of several of the novels and tales, including *The Awkward Age*, *What Maisie Knew*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Aspern Papers*, and *The Wings of the Dove*, Pearson's comprehensive study examines the various framing strategies at work and considers the broader theoretical implications of reading through the prefaces.

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