

Henry James's *The Ambassadors*: the promise to lonely adolescents that there will be a future.

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Henry James's "The Ambassadors": The Promise to Lonely Adolescents that There Will Be a Future

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Abstract

Adolescence is a lonely time for all of us, as we shift our emotional attachment from our parents to our own autonomous selves and to those people outside our families who will be essential to our emotional growth. Perhaps because Henry James's novel *The Ambassadors* (1903) deals so masterfully with this subject, it promised the author that there would be a future beyond her senior year in college. The novel has two protagonists: a young American who has arrived at his maturity in Paris, and a middle-aged man who lives in a gray, ungratifying world because he has missed the opportunity to complete his unfolding into an independent sexual being. For background material, James called upon two periods from his own life: his

unhappy adolescence, which he overcame by making a life for himself as a writer in England, and his continuing emotional growth at the time he wrote the novel, at the age of 56. The author deals with both adolescence itself and with the ways in which we use the coping skills and creative strengths we developed in adolescence to enrich our lives and sustain ourselves at times of crisis.

HENRY JAMES'S "THE AMBASSADORS"

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that there will be a future*

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EIGHT YEARS AFTER *The Ambassadors* was written, Henry James wrote to his older brother William exhorting him to permit his son Billy to remain in

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