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AMERICAN LITERATURE (Part – 2)

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19. Henry James's The Lesson of the Master

Henry James

Life:

- ♥ Henry James was born on 15 April, 1843, New York, U.S.
- ♥ His parents were **Henry James sr.** and **Mary Walsh.**
- ♥ His brother was **William James** and his sister was **Alice James.**
- ♥ He studied in **Harvard Law School**
- ♥ He got British Citizenship in July 1915
- ♥ His friends were **Dean Howells, Eliot Norton, Wendell Holmes, Thoreau and Emerson.**
- ♥ He died on 28 Feb, 1916, **London, England.**

Career:

- Henry James was an **American novelist, critic.**
- He was awarded **“the Order of Merit”** in 1916.
- He was awarded **“Pulitzer prize”** in **“1931”** for his biography **“Charles W.Eliot”.**
- He was a key figure in 19th century **Literary Criticism.**
- He called as **“Man of Letters”.**
- He wrote for **“The Nation”** and **“Atlantic Monthly”.**
- He is called as innovator of **“Psychological Realism”.**
- He coined the term **“Point of view”.**
- He is the follower of **“Swedenborg”.**
- He was the author of **“Realism movement”.**
- His works were published in
 - **“Atlantic monthly”**
 - **“North American Review”**
 - **“North American Tribune”**
 - **“Nation”**
- His novels show **Americans encountering Europe and Europeans.**
- He insists that **writers will be allowed the greatest possible freedom** in presenting their view of the world.
- He used the techniques of **“point of view, interior monologue, unreliable narrator”.**

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- F.R. Leavis' four best novelists in his "Great tradition" are
 - ♣ **Jane Austen**
 - ♣ **George Eliot**
 - ♣ **Joseph Conrad**
 - ♣ **Henry James**
- His brother "William James" coined the term "Stream of Consciousness".
- He wrote on **questions on theology**.
- He wrote a critical essay "Hawthorne".
- His models were Dickens, Balzac, "Hawthorne".
- He is the key figure of 19th century "Literary Realism".
- His novels show the encountering of Americans with Europeans.

Works:

- *Roderick Hudson (1876)*
 - * It is the first novel
- *The American (1877)*
 - * A novel on Christopher Newman.
- *The Turn of the Screw (1898)*
 - * A novella of horror, Gothic, ghost story.
- *The Portrait of a Lady (1881)*
 - * A novel on young American woman "Isabel Archer".
- *What Maisie Knew (1897)*
 - * A novel on the sensitive daughter (Maisie) of divorced, irresponsible parents.
- *The Wings of the Dove (1902)*
 - * A novel on Milly Theale, an American heiress stricken with a serious disease.
- *Daisy Miller (1879)*
 - * A novella on the courtship of the beautiful American girl Daisy Miller by Winterbourne.
- *The Ambassadors (1903)*
 - * A novel on Lewis Lambert stretching to Europe in pursuit of Chad, his widowed fiancée's son.
- *A Tragedy of Error (1864)*

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- * This is his first short story
- *Guy Domville (1895)*
 - * It is his drama.
- *The Art of Fiction (1884)*
 - * It was published in “**Partial Portraits**” (Collection of essays)
 - * It is James’s plea for the widest possible freedom in content and technique in narrative fiction.
- *The Golden Bowl.*
 - * It is a novel on Adam Verver
- *Ivory Tower*
- *Sense of the Past*
- *Washington Square*

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The Lesson of the Master

Type	:	Novella
First Published	:	1888 (<i>The Universal Review</i>)
Setting	:	England mostly
Theme	:	Personal commitments are hindrance to artistic success The artist must sacrifice normal human relations for the sake of artistic success
Narration	:	First Person
Division	:	6 Sections

- ❖ ***The Lesson of the Master* is a novella written by Henry James.**
- ❖ It was first published in **The Universal Review** for July-August **1888**.
- ❖ It later appeared in the collection of stories which included ***The Marriages, The Pupil, Brooksmith, The Solution, and Sir Edmund Orme*** published in New York and London by Macmillan in 1892.
- ❖ It is the work that reveals at the height of Henry James's powers.
- ❖ The novella tells the story of a young writer, **Paul Overt**, who meets **Henry St. George**, a famous novelist Overt admires.
- ❖ During that time, Overt also meets and falls in love with **Marian Fancourt**, a young woman who admires both St. George's and Overt's work.
- ❖ During their meetings, St. George, who is married, advises Overt against getting married and having children, arguing that a wife and children will be the death of Overt's creativity and career.
- ❖ Overt then takes an extended vacation in which he considers St. George's advice. When he returns, he learns that St. George's wife had died, and that St. George had taken Marian Fancourt as his wife.
- ❖ Overt feels that St. George had set him up in order to have Miss Fancourt for himself, but St. George insists that by marrying her, he saved Overt and his career.
- ❖ ***"You know as well as you sit there that you'd put a pistol-ball into your brain if you had written my books!"***
- ❖ Exemplifying Henry James's famous belief that **"Art makes life,"** *The Lesson of the Master* is a piercing study of the life that art makes.

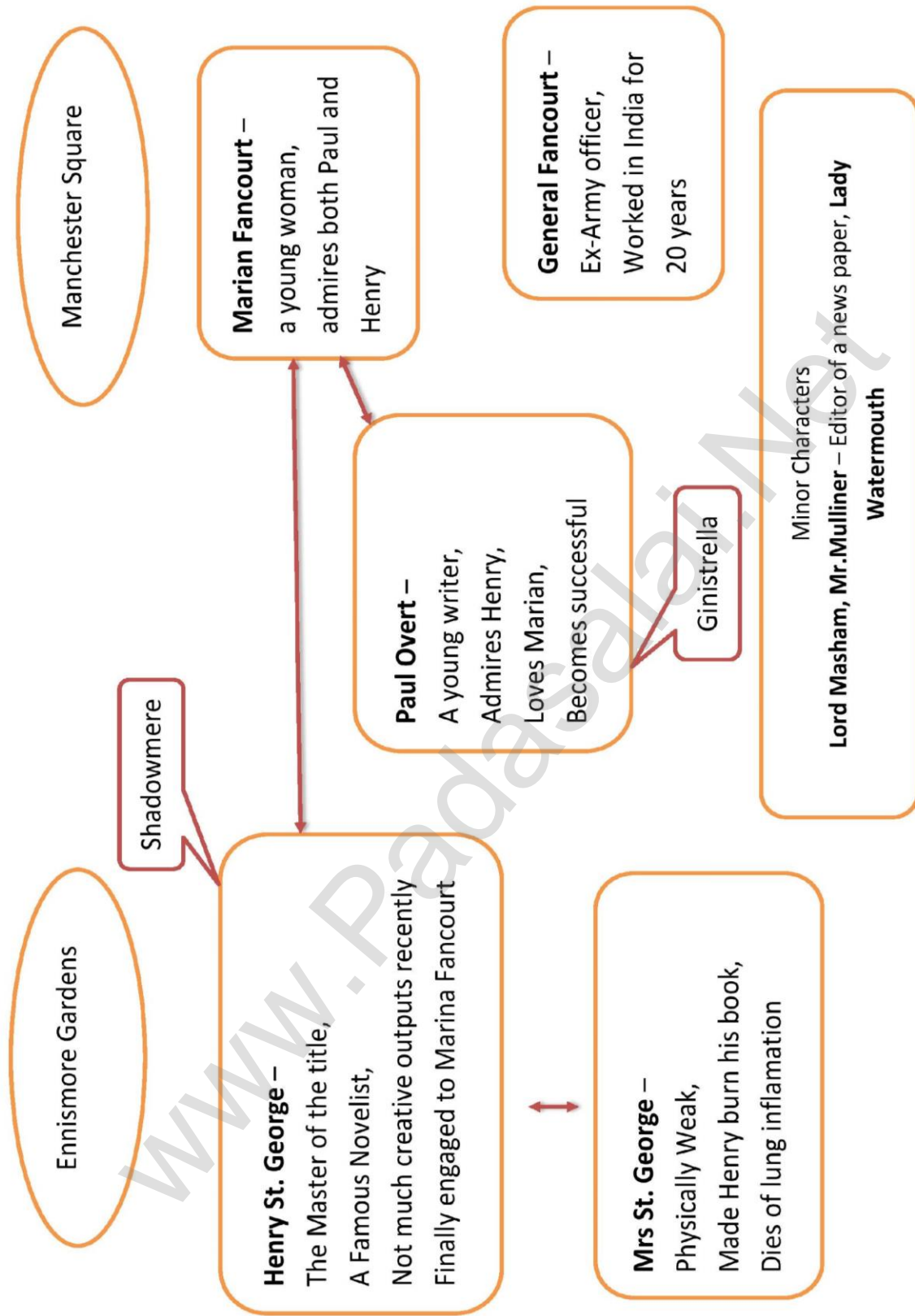
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- ❖ When the tale's protagonist—a gifted young writer—meets and befriends a famous author he has long idolized, he is both repelled by and attracted to the artist's great secret: the emotional costs of a life dedicated to art.
- ❖ With extraordinary psychological insight and devastating wit, the novella asks the question of whether art is, ultimately, demeaning or ennobling for the artist, while capturing the ambiguities of a life devoted to art, and the choices artists must make.
- ❖ In the Art of the Novella series, Melville House celebrates this renegade art form and its practitioners with titles that are, in many instances, presented in book form for the first time.

Character List:

- ◆ I - the occasional outer narrator
- ◆ Paul Overt - young author of *Ginistrella*
- ◆ Henry St George - celebrated author of *Shadowmere*
- ◆ Mrs. St George - his wife
- ◆ General Fancourt - ex India army officer
- ◆ Marian Fancourt - his intelligent and attractive daughter

The Lesson of the Master Character Map



AKSHIRAA COACHING CENTRE – SET/NET/ARTS TRB - English Study Material**Summary****Part I**

Young author Paul Overt arrives at a country house weekend summer party hoping to meet the celebrated writer Henry St George. He is slightly shocked by his wife Mrs St George, who announces that she once made her husband burn a ‘bad’ book. Overt believes he can recognize literary and artistic ‘types’, and is surprised that St George looks so conventional. St George has also not written anything of merit for quite some time.

Part II

At lunch Overt sits opposite St George, who appears to be flirting with pretty young Marian Fancourt, to whom Overt is afterwards introduced by her father. She tells him how much she admires his books and reveals that St George is critical of his own work and wishes to meet Overt whose writing he has read. They meet St George in the house, where Overt continues to persuade himself of the older man’s virtues, despite the fact that it is clear he has not read Overt’s work. There is then a walk in the park, where Overt accompanies Mrs St George, who he later learns is not in good health.

Part III

After dinner Overt is joined in the smoking room by St George, who praises Overt’s writing, confesses his own declining powers, and recommends not having children. He reveals that his wife forbids him to smoke and drink. St George invites Overt to dinner at his own country house, and then they share their enthusiasm for Marian Fancourt, who St George urges him to pursue.

Part IV

Overt meets Marian Fancourt at an art exhibition in London. They make further arrangements to meet, and are joined by St George, who has invited her there. St George takes her away to drive through Hyde Park, leaving Overt puzzled and a little envious. Nevertheless, next Sunday he visits Marian at home in Manchester Square, where they compare notes on St George, and Overt is so impressed by her artistic and literary appreciation that he falls in love with her. As he is leaving Manchester Square he sees St George arriving at the house. When Overt visits her again the following Sunday she tells him that St George will not be seeing her again.

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Part V

Overt eventually goes to dinner at St George's house in Ennismore Gardens, after which he is invited to stay for conversation in the windowless library and study. St George once again claims that he has prostituted his own talent for financial gain, and that his wife and children are an impediment to his reaching an artistic high point. He claims that material and domestic success has prevented him from achieving his true potential. When the subject of Miss Fancourt crops up, St George argues that Overt must give her up if he wishes to be a successful writer. Overt claims that such is his wish.

Part VI

Fired with enthusiasm, Overt leaves England and goes to stay on Lake Geneva to work on his next book. On receiving news of the death of Mrs St George, he is puzzled by her husband's appreciative catalogue of her qualities and good offices. Overt thinks of returning, but stays away for two years to finish his novel. When he returns to London however, he learns that Miss Fancourt is due to marry St George. Overt feels he has been duped by both of them, but when he visits a party at Manchester Square. St George claims that he has been entirely consistent in his views – and has given up writing. Overt goes home to an uncertain future, but when his book appears in the autumn it is a success.