Henry James is the person who started the serious discussion of fiction with his theoretical reviews, pieces of literary criticism and prefaces he wrote for his own novels. It is a good idea to read his piece titled “The Art of Fiction” through <https://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/artfiction.html> or <http://virgil.org/dswo/courses/novel/james-fiction.pdf> before discussing “The Real Thing”. James is one of the most important literary figures who paved the way for modernism though the short story at hand is more associated with realism than modernism. “The Real Thing” should be read as a protomodernist work that poses a serious objection to the idea of mimesis.

The short story can be found here http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2715

Suggested Reading: Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*

Study Questions

1. What does the theory of mimesis propose about art and nature?

2. What is Henry James’s contribution to American fiction?

3. Why do the Monarchs think they are ideal models?

4. What is wrong about the Monarchs in the artist’s point of view?

5. What does the artist/narrator learn from his experience with the Monarchs?

6. What’s a Künstlersroman?

7. What is the function of the artist’s friend in the work?