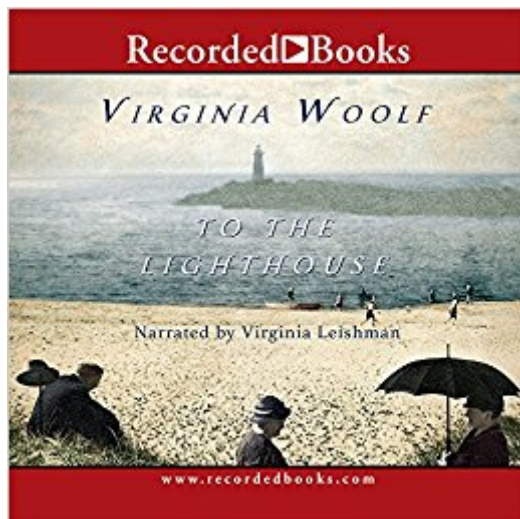


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To The Lighthouse



Synopsis

One of the icons of modernism, Virginia Woolf is credited alongside James Joyce for redefining the novel and challenging the limitations of the form. Published in 1927, *To the Lighthouse* helped establish Woolf among the 20th century's most important and influential writers. At their second home on the Isle of Skye, the Ramsay family surrounds itself with friends and colleagues. They contend with World War I, family deaths, and hardships both spoken and unspoken. All the while, the lighthouse looms in the distance. Six-year-old James asks his father to take him there, but many years will pass before the voyage begins. Woolf was deeply interested in her characters' inner thoughts and feelings, and because of this, *To the Lighthouse* emerges as an unforgettable, introspective masterpiece.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. It's wondrous to listen to a fine reading of a long-loved novel. Leishman makes masterly use of volume, timbre and resonance to distinguish between characters and draw us into the emotional swings and vibrations of the internal musings of each. She creates not a new but a more nuanced reading, following the interwoven streams of consciousness in a British English that lends authenticity to each voice. Leishman swims smoothly through Woolf's sentences that ebb and flow with numerous parenthetical thoughts and fresh images. These passages are interspersed with quick, sharp, simple sentences that gain strength in contrast. Leishman also draws our attention to Woolf's poetic prose: her rhythms and images, her use of hard consonants in monosyllabic words in counterpoint to long, soft, dreamy words and phrases. *To The Lighthouse* plays back and forth

between telescopic and microscopic views of nature and human nature. Mrs. Ramsey is both trapped in and pleased in her roles as wife, mother and hostess. The introspective Mr. Ramsey is consumed with his legacy of long-since-published abstract philosophy. This is a book that cannot be read or heard too often. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Virginia Woolf stands as the chief figure of modernism in England and must be included with Joyce and Proust in the realization of experiments that have completely broken with tradition."

As is the case for every novel, there are characters that one can admire and those that one can detest. This can be by design by the author or by accidental imputation by the reader. This novel does not leave the reader neutral, and in fact does not require neutrality. In this work there is no gallivanting from one chapter to the next, but deterministic linearity between them is absent also. Readers will find no restful equilibrium. Only movement and instability are possible. The personalities of the characters are their thoughts, and if words are absent this is by intent, as a kind of deliberate debasement with no redemption possible. There is the intriguing Lily Briscoe, who stays within the boundaries of the canvas, but is comfortable with changing its surface into oil-ordained permanence. But her personal surface, that which she painted in the presence of Mr. Ramsey, was but a temporary front, not terribly original, but sufficed for the moment. Lily also responds delightfully and negatively to the misogynistic assertion that women can't write or paint. Then there is James Ramsey, who is homologous to the typical academic, permanently insecure and self-absorbed, hypersensitive to criticism, perpetually requiring praise, with smugness and arrogance being immediate corollaries. This is someone with no rhythm in his personality and stale in his outlooks. He has a sense of life that deems it difficult, but not stoic in his reaction to it. Only in privacy does he feel safe, and he consistently requires sympathy from his wife and eight children. Being happy, or rather appearing to be so, was a vulgar confession, to be classified as nonsensical and trivial. If only this character were more colorful; if only he were a chatterbox of free-flowing language. If only he were not as a piece of Scottish limestone that will break into thin pieces even under the slight pressure and perturbation of criticism. And Mrs. Ramsay, intimidated by change, engaging in false protection of her husband (with purported but unconvincing reverence), but aware of the masks she puts on when doing so, and always seeking comfort and solace in customs, the latter of which serve to quiet the soul, to protect it from the flux of Heraclitus. Happiness to her is a transient phenomenon, and she gladly and consciously accepted her children's

insights, believing that they had the distinct quality and ability to move her into the future. This is a novel par excellence, where the genius of expression, the greatness of articulation, and the beauty of prose have a chance to combine and entangle themselves with the reader, who will after finishing it have one emotion that will stand out and overwhelm the others:
astonishment...astonishment....astonishment....astonishment.....

Virginia Woolf facile use of the English language is breath-taking. She conveys the interior monologue of her characters, with its tangents and non-sequiturs, lucidly and it easy for the reader to follow without becoming disoriented or lost in the words. Read this just to savor her sentences! The ideas of someone from pre- and post-WW I was an interesting contrast as well.

Stream of consciousness; one of the most cohesive and conflicting forms of writing invented. But it certainly is beautiful. As with any other Woolf novel, it twists and turns, revealing multitudinous layers. And for those of you that find it "dry" I encourage you to read until the end, when the story line collapsed on a single idea, a single focal point (one of which makes you question the essence of human creativity and subsequent creation). With every read, I promise you, it'll reveal different bits and new perspectives. However, I'm biased. I've loved Woolf since reading "Mrs. Dalloway" and "Jacob's Room"

I did like the story - read the book to experience Virginia Woolf for the first time. Whatever was said about her "...stream of consciousness" style of writing would have differing opinion today.... more like an example of a "manic" style of prose.

Interesting. Its hard to follow the plot though. For example, now are they at the lighthouse or home? Lots of times, I just don't know where and when all these actions are happening. Then, whose around? William Banke(an old friend of Mr. Ramsey) shows up suddenly and seems to want to spend time with Lily Biscoe(Mr. Ramsey's daughter). Then after a while, I realized he's gone. But when did he leave? I thought he was still around when he wasn't. I enjoyed the all the perspectives and opinions of the characters. But the plot is definitely lacking.

This classic by Virginia Woolf is presented in a very bad book and page form. It is difficult to read: bad leading, bad sentence and paragraph formatting, and many typos and words left out. It looks like it was made on a one-at-a-time book printer. It's better to buy a good used copy by a standard

book edition--it's usually less expensive, including shipping charges.

This took me a few chapters to get into, but when I did, I really did. Someone else wrote this tip, and it is absolutely true: sit down and spend a chunk of time at a go on this. Don't just read a few pages before falling asleep. The music of the writing takes a little while to settle into at first and then it becomes beautiful. These characters will stick with you.

Stunned at Virginia Woolf's mind and writing ability. Though I love to read, I find many "literary" novels pretentious and dull--but not this one! It reads like poetry and blazes with life and intelligence and wit. I won't try to describe what it's about because my effort would only diminish its vitality. All that said, I'm an older person and really don't know if I could have appreciated it in the same way when I was young.

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