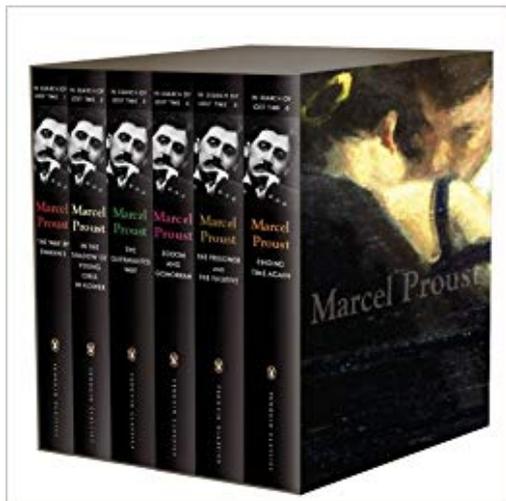


In Search of Lost Time *by* Marcel Proust



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Author: Marcel Proust

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Since the original, pre-war translation there has been no completely new rendering of the French original into English. This translation brings to the fore a more sharply engaged, comic and lucid Proust. IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME is one of the greatest, most entertaining reading experiences in any language. As the great story unfolds from its magical opening scenes to its devastating end, this complete collection of the multi-volume novel makes Proust accessible to a new generation.



Reviews of the *In Search of Lost Time* *by* Marcel Proust

Dori

Three days ago I finished reading Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Today I will begin my second reading. That's the best recommendation I can give. In a lifetime of reading I have never read a book twice in a row outside of an academic requirement. This rereading is not motivated by a sense of "that was good, hit restart and do it again." There is a "secret" in Proust's book that, when revealed, invites rereading. It's not a secret, I just don't want to try to explain here when it is in the books I reference below. According to one source I read, it is not uncommon for those who finish Proust's book to want to immediately reread. This review is about how I completed my first reading, not a summary of the book. More than most books, first time readers of *In Search of Lost Time* need a plan to have a reasonable prospect for success. In this review I will share the questions I asked and decisions I made. The fact that I finished the book should indicate the decisions I made were right for me and my circumstance. I hope what I write will allow others to weigh my decisions and apply them to their own circumstance. In order to judge how your circumstances differ from mine, a bit about mine. I'm in my early sixties and retired. I was able to plan on an hour of quiet time per day for Proust. I'm a lifelong reader with wide-ranging tastes. I tried reading *In Search of Lost Time* several times and never got past page 50. But Proust's book remained on my Bucket Reading list. I read on my iPad using the Kindle App. I listened to the Audiobook and read simultaneously. My first reading took five months reading one hour a day on most days.

First decision, what is the book about and does it interest me? There is a lot of well intentioned but misguided and potentially misleading info about Proust's book. Seek opinions from whomever you like. But I also strongly recommend seeking professional advice. I have two books to recommend. Not to buy and read entirely (at least not yet), but to read the introduction. If you have an e-reader, download these free samples and read them. These books are Proust's *Way: A Field Guide to In Search of Lost Time* by Roger Shattuck and Marcel Proust's *Search for Lost Time: A Reader's Guide to The Remembrance of Things Past* by Patrick Alexander. These books address such questions as Proust's style and the length of the book.

Next decision, which translation should I read? None ideally. Read it in French. That wasn't an option for me. In my opinion the translation question is way over emphasized. This isn't Homer, Virgil, Dante etc. Proust's book was written One Hundred years ago. All modern English translations are suitable for first time readers. I used the Public Domain C.K.Scott Moncrieff translation for all but the last volume (which Moncrieff left unfinished at his death). I chose Moncrieff's translation because it was what the Audiobook used. I was well satisfied. I have purchased the Modern Library version where I will post this review, but my second reading will also use Moncrieff's translation. In comparing Modern Library's (MKE) translation to Moncrieff the first sentence of the second paragraph starts: "I would ask myself what O'Clock it could be;" (Moncrieff) vs "I would ask myself what time it could be;" (MKE). If that kind of difference makes a difference to you, buy one of the expensive copyrighted translations.

Next decision, what edition should I use? One with the fewest footnotes, endnotes, summaries, appendices etc. Proust wrote *In Search of Lost Time* to be a self-contained story. There are hundred's of character's (but less than 20 main characters) lots of references to paintings, music, plays, and books. Character's names and titles (for the aristocracy) are mind-boggling. Proust understands your concern and accommodates his readers. Names, places artwork etc that are important to the story are repeated over and over. Historical events are discussed by characters to understand what you need to know for the story. When such things are in past volumes, the circumstance of their location in the story are recalled to refresh the reader's memory. Stopping to look up such things in appendices or footnotes interrupts the narrative flow. Narrative flow is important and one of the aesthetically pleasing aspects of the book. If you really want to know about a referenced art-work or historical event, make a note and look it up on Wikipedia after the day's reading.

Next decision, what supplementary materials should I read to prepare for reading Proust? None. Oh, I did read Alain de Botton's *How Proust Can Change Your Life*, great book, but not a deciding factor to read Proust for me. Summaries are counterproductive. Proust generates and maintains suspense by deliberately pacing disclosure of even minor details. Again citing Shattuck: "One must read Proust as carefully as a detective story in which any detail may become a clue to everything else." *In Search of Lost Time* is enjoyed best one page at a time without any knowledge of what the next page will bring. Guides and notes I addressed above. Biographies of Proust are particularly counterproductive. Despite everything you read to the contrary, *In Search of Lost Time* is not Proust's Autobiography. The more you focus on Proust, the harder it will be to understand the "big picture" of Proust's book. AFTER completing *In Search of Lost Time* is the time to review reference books. I read the Shattuck book referenced above and Howard Moss' *The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust* after completing the book.

Next decision, listen to the Audiobook while reading? I learned some time ago that listening while reading gave me a tremendous advantage in accessing challenging literature. But Roger Shattuck puts the case best for listening to Proust, "The best way to discover and respond to Proust's expressive voice, as well as the deliberate pacing of his narrative, is to hear the prose, to read it out loud." Correct pronunciation of names, titles, places, ect. is important to me for comprehension. So I let the Audio Narrator do that for me (Naxos Production with Neville Jason narrating). Shattuck also states: "Without an auditory sense of the text, even in its most reflective and interior passages, the visual field of unrelieved print tends to become oppressive. Translations cannot convey the original texture, yet on this score the available versions perform remarkably well. They all bear reading aloud." The Audio made the notoriously long sentences seem completely natural to me. There are several Audio versions of at least the first volume (Swann's Way). The only Complete Unabridged AudioBook of *In Search of Lost Time* in English as of the date of this review is Naxos Production, Neville Jason narrator. The text narrated is the Moncrieff translation for the first six volumes and Jason and another gentleman collaborated on a translation for the seventh volume (which I didn't use because there was no published text. I made do with reading the last volume and was fine with it because I knew how to read the text and pronounce names by then.

- Next decision, just listen to the Audiobook or an Abridged version? Having listened and read, I can't imagine listening to this book without reading. It just does not seem well-suited to casual listening, at least to me. At 153 hours, Naxos claims their Audiobook of Proust's book is the longest recorded to date. That's lots of time to listen to other books. As for abridged versions, As a matter of preference I don't read them. Your mileage may vary.

Next decision, other techniques? I don't normally highlight novels, but I highlighted a lot in Proust's book. Electronic highlighting. This was a learned process as I went along. First I highlighted shifts in time and place (which are easy to lose track of). The narrator may be standing on a platform waiting to board a train, something makes him start thinking and we are off on a 20 page digression, it's good to be able to flip back and see that we are still standing on the train platform. In a different color I highlighted names and titles of new characters and place names. I highlighted interesting or funny passages in a third color and seemingly important passages in a fourth color. Was it distracting? No, it became second nature.

A few closing thoughts on my first reading. For three and a quarter volumes I soldiered on. It was beautifully written and often very funny but I didn't have the "fire in my belly." Shattuck and others note that many give up after a few pages, or one to two volumes. You can't even begin to understand the plot after the first two volumes (at least unaided as I recommend). Then the book "clicked" for me. It requires persistence. I'm really glad I stuck with it.

Ce

If you are looking to buy the Kindle version "Proust 6-pack", check out the pricing of the individual Kindle volumes before doing so. At the time of this review, the first volume costs \$12.99, while successive volumes cost \$2.99 each, a total of about \$27.95. Strangely, the 6-pack costs \$49.99.

Tiv

Note: the rating refers to the e-book release; the superb work by Proust deserves all 5 stars.

I purchased this 6 book collection, and it turns out there is no easy way to move from book to book inside the collection.

At the Kindle Home screen you see a single element, which is the six volume book; at the table of contents of any of the 6 books you are reading you only see contents for that book, not for the whole collection.

The only practical way to move to another book is to GO-TO Cover, move down a few pages, and then click on the Collection Table of Contents in order to jump to the book you want to (or bookmark that page of course).

You would expect the Kindle to have a single table of contents which lists each volume and each chapter.

Please Amazon, this is the most expensive e-book I purchased so far, can't you come up with a more user-friendly solution?

Another issue of this multivolume book I don't enjoy is the way the locations and percentages are shown in relation to the whole collection.

At the very least I would like to have an option to display the location or page number and percentage in relation to the current book.

Niwield

A long slog. But well worth it. Actually one loooooong novel spread over 7 books and it would have been longer had Proust lived longer. Beautifully told and nuanced view of fin-de-siecle Paris and France in general and of the mind and spirit of the narrator. I knew of it but wasn't quite prepared for the virulent anti-semitism permeating all levels of French society (witness the Dreyfus Affaire). It was truly the end of old aristocratic Europe and how WWI swept all that away. A great variety of sexual permutations on display: how much was known and "done" but never talked about, at least publicly ! The meditations on art and music are arresting. It took me a little over 10 months of assiduous reading to plow through it all. Now that I have, I will after a break (there are other books after all) ... I will read it again !

Gholbimand

This is a beautiful set, but I think it is a softcover edition of Random House's hardback set that came out several years ago. The translation is not in any way updated or changed. I now have 7 copies of one of my favorite books. My only quibble is the blurb on the box which is the same as on the Amazon description. I think comments on books should be written by people who liked the books and have something interesting to say. Or at least something more than cute little metaphors about the prose being snow and slick ice. I wish they'd left the blurb off and gone with just a picture. And on that score, if the box had said a Proust "6-pack" like the ad said (and when I ordered it, I wasn't sure it wouldn't), I would not have kept it. It is a beautiful set and at half price, is absolutely worth it. As for the novel itself, I don't have anything to say. For almost 100 years people have been discussing and praising it. I loved it.

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