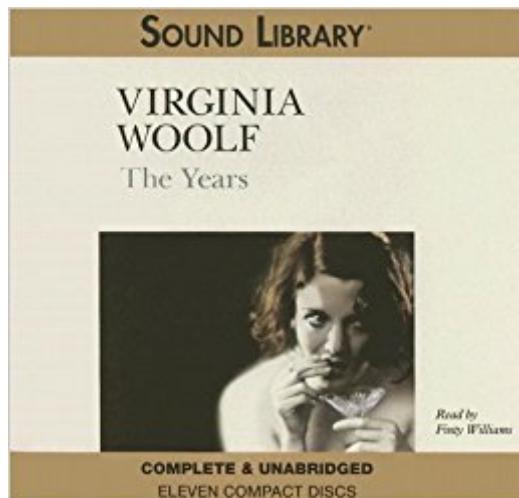


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# The Years



## **Synopsis**

The Years is a sweeping tale of three generations of the Pargiter family, from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, in the thick of life's cycles of birth, death, and the search for a pattern in all the chaos. Annotated and with an introduction by Eleanor McNees --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"An astonishing editorial achievement." Times Literary Supplement --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

This first scholarly edition of The Years provides a fully collated and annotated text. It includes a substantial introduction, explanatory notes and detailed textual apparatus tracking Woolf's extensive revisions. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

the story of a family which changed from one millenium to the other. the changes in uses, traditions, how life changes and while the person is immerse in that change the character and uses change. A vivid story plenty of feelings .The secret stories of each family is also reflected in this great work of Virginia Wolf

Any Virginia Woolf lover would love this. It takes some time to read to really understand what is going on - especially if you aren't familiar with her writing style - but it is well worth it. Would not

recommend this as a first read of Woolf's, but definitely for a developed fan that has not yet reached this point in her collection.

Take it as a slow read. Have the patience to breath with the lovely descriptions of nature and city surroundings, A bit old fashioned of course but beautiful. Akin to Proust, lovely and tongue in cheek. Very sharp observation of special characters.

This book is like a classic painting, and it is like a Lily among thorns, so to speak. It is. a signature style that is intelligent, interesting, and unique. I say it is a masterpiece. I highly recommend this book for such a great style of writing, and for the learning experience.

great

I was an English major, but somehow, I never read anything by Virginia Woolf, so when our book club suggested this book, I was all in favor of it. But I found it tedious and boring. The point of view is constantly shifting between different characters, in a way that feels amateurish to me, though obviously Ms. Woolf is no amateur. So apparently this is supposed to work, and to mean something, but I just found it annoying. There is a large family of children, I couldn't even keep count of how many, and they all grow up and have children, and the people pop in and out of the story--it was just a muddle to me. Even the supposedly evocative descriptions of the weather and the landscape fell flat for me. The only positive thing in the book to me was the descriptions of locales in London. Otherwise, I simply had no interest in any of the characters. And in the end, nothing ever happened. Years go by. But we knew that.

This book left me a vision of early 20th century England -- the people, the homes, the classes, modes of transportation, socialization, prejudices, and compassion. I felt like I was there and knew the characters.

But Eleanor was standing with her back to them. She was watching a taxi that was gliding slowly round the square. It stopped in front of a house two doors down."Aren't they lovely?" said Delia, holding out the flowers.Eleanor started."The roses? Yes..." she said. But she was watching the cab. A young man had got out; he paid the driver. Then a girl in a tweed travelling suit followed him. He fitted his latch-key to the door. "There," Eleanor murmured, as he opened the door and they stood

for a moment on the threshold. "There!" she repeated, as the door shut with a little thud behind them.[...]The sun had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace.=====These are the last few lines (with one small omission) of Virginia Woolf's last major novel, THE YEARS, which I find to be at the same time Woolf's most approachable work and also her most original. Were this a normal novel, I would not dream of quoting the closing lines without spoiler alerts. But no spoilers are possible here, because Woolf avoids the normal narrative chain of cause and effect. The couple entering their house in the early morning are people we have not seen before, and probably would not see again even if the book were twice as long. The beauty of the passage is in the moment, one small example of life going on in an entire book about life going on, fleeting moment after fleeting moment. Eleanor Pargiter, a woman now in her seventies, is a major character; her sister Delia, whose party in a London town house is just ending, is a more minor one; but the point is less to show what has happened to these particular women whom we first met when the book began fifty years earlier, but simply to show that they are still alive, as witnesses to the changing world around them. When I started the opening section, set in 1880, I had trouble keeping track of the seven or eight children of Colonel Abel Pargiter, in whose London house the book opens. The immensely helpful introduction by Eleanor McNees, who edited and annotated the Harcourt edition, reproduces a sketch of the Pargiter family tree from one of Woolf's notebooks, but it was obvious that some of the names and dates had been changed. In vain did I look for a version online. But I gradually came to see that this did not matter. A few of the children would become major figures, others would reappear only once or twice, and still others would disappear from the story almost completely, to be replaced by various cousins, nephews, and nieces. McNees makes the point that while most novels are focused, centripetal, this one is centrifugal. Think of ripples moving outwards in the pond of time, getting broken up into little wavelets as they move away from the centre, each reflecting a piece of the sky or the world around them. As she does in THE WAVES, though with greater naturalism, Woolf begins each section with a description of the weather over England; she closes the book in that way too, as in the excerpt above. So even though there is a chronological movement through the decades, it is balanced against the rhythm of the seasons, cyclical and eternal. The chapters, all of different lengths, are headed 1880, 1891, 1907, 1908, 1910, 1911, 1913, 1914, 1917, 1918, and "Present Day" (presumably around 1930). The autumn wind that blows across England in the opening to the 1891 section strikes the houses of two of the characters, one in Northumberland, the other in Devon, who have apparently got married in the eleven-year gap, neither to people whom one might have expected. Another author might have made a whole novel out of either of these -- but Woolf, after

her brief puff of breeze, moves on. For her, such milestone events always take place offstage. Look again at the dates above. *THE YEARS* is the only novel I know set in the early twentieth century where the reader approaches the First World War without any sense of dread. Woolf observes it, certainly; there is a scene with some people drinking wine in a basement with bombs falling overhead. But when a character joins the army, the main reaction is to question the rightness of war, rather the doomed foreshadowing of death that has become a WW1 novelist's clichÃ©. At least one member of the family does die, of course, but this is something we learn about much later, as with all the other deaths, which are simply treated as another part of life. Between them, the Pargiters cover most of the occupations typical of the upper middle classes in that period. Among the men, we have an Oxford don, a chancery lawyer, a financier, and a soldier turned farmer in the colonies. One of the women in the younger generation becomes a doctor, but her aunts have no such professions open to them. Instead, one of them builds housing for the poor, another works for women's suffrage, and another -- a deliciously offbeat character whom Woolf may have based on herself -- becomes a writer. There are marriages too, both high and low, but Woolf has no time for the "marriage plots" of the 19th-century novel. Many of her characters remain single, and there are hints of homosexual or asexual attractions also. And even the traditional openings are seldom followed through; one of the men in that closing party, for instance, meets a pretty girl and gets her permission to have him call on her the next day -- but we never discover what happens; we do not even know her name. And although inevitably most of the characters are of a certain class, one of the most moving sections in the entire book, that of 1913, features the old servant Crosby, leaving the house on Abercorn Terrace for the last time after it has been sold. *THE YEARS* may not have a plot, but it absolutely has a setting: London. Just as she had done in *MRS DALLOWAY* (and using many of the same devices), Woolf paints the metropolis in glimpses through windows, trips by omnibus or on foot, visits to houses grubby or grand, creating a sensory picture in sight, scent, and above all sound. And unlike that earlier novel, which is set in a single day, this covers a fifty-year span. The sounds of lamplighters' footsteps and horses hooves that came through the window in 1880 are replaced by a less pleasant cacophony in the present day: "Against the dull background of traffic noises, of wheels turning and brakes squeaking, there rose near at hand the cry of a woman suddenly alarmed for her child; the monotonous cry of a man selling vegetables; and far away a barrel-organ was playing." And I have just noticed that the 1930s passage with which I opened is prefigured by a similar scene in 1880, just one of Woolf's impressionistic orchestration of fleeting moments that gave me greater delight than any other novel of hers.=====The houses opposite all had the same front gardens; the same steps; the same pillars; the same bow windows. But now

dusk was falling and they looked spectral and insubstantial in the dim light. Lamps were being lit; a light glowed in the drawing-room opposite; then the curtains were drawn, and the room was blotted out. Delia stood looking down at the street. A woman of the lower classes was wheeling a perambulator; an old man tottered along with his hands behind his back. Then the street was empty; there was a pause. Here came a hansom jingling down the road. Delia was momentarily interested. Was it going to stop at their door or not? She gazed more intently. But then, to her regret, the cabman jerked his reins, the horse stumbled on; the cab stopped two doors lower down.

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