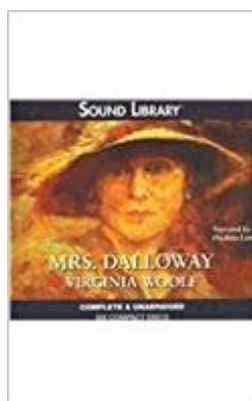


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Mrs. Dalloway



Synopsis

Clarissa Dalloway, elegant and vivacious, is preparing for a party and remembering those she once loved. In another part of London, Septimus Warren Smith is shell-shocked and on the brink of madness. Smith's day interweaves with that of Clarissa and her friends, their lives converging as the party reaches its glittering climax. Past, present and future are brought together on a momentous June day in 1923.

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Customer Reviews

As Clarissa Dalloway walks through London on a fine June morning, a sky-writing plane captures her attention. Crowds stare upwards to decipher the message while the plane turns and loops, leaving off one letter, picking up another. Like the airplane's swooping path, Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway follows Clarissa and those whose lives brush hers--from Peter Walsh, whom she spurned years ago, to her daughter Elizabeth, the girl's angry teacher, Doris Kilman, and war-shocked Septimus Warren Smith, who is sinking into madness. As Mrs. Dalloway prepares for the party she is giving that evening, a series of events intrudes on her composure. Her husband is invited, without her, to lunch with Lady Bruton (who, Clarissa notes anxiously, gives the most amusing luncheons). Meanwhile, Peter Walsh appears, recently from India, to criticize and confide in her. His sudden arrival evokes memories of a distant past, the choices she made then, and her wistful friendship with Sally Seton. Woolf then explores the relationships between women and men, and between women, as Clarissa muses, "It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together.... Her

relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love?" While Clarissa is transported to past afternoons with Sally, and as she sits mending her green dress, Warren Smith catapults desperately into his delusions. Although his troubles form a tangent to Clarissa's web, they undeniably touch it, and the strands connecting all these characters draw tighter as evening deepens. As she immerses us in each inner life, Virginia Woolf offers exquisite, painful images of the past bleeding into the present, of desire overwhelmed by society's demands. --Joannie Kervran Stangeland --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"As an edition for enriching one's personal reading or for use in discussion with students, I cannot think of a better one. And at £4.99 a copy, I wholeheartedly recommend it!" Virginia Woolf Bulletin, No. 6, January 2001 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I found Mrs. Dalloway a challenging book to read, and probably best read with a class or reading group. There is a lot of personalities and themes to pick up. Woolf's style is challenging, particularly the lack of chapters or subtle breaks in settings and characters. What I appreciated is the beautiful language and use of alliteration. I picked Mrs. Dalloway because of recommendations after reading The Hours by Michael Cunningham.

I think this is one of the best novels ever. Virginia Woolf is like a bee going from flower to flower, resting on them, and describing a marvellous arabesque of one day in Westminster that ends at a party held at Mrs. Dalloway house in the evening. Gorgeous.

A TRUE CLASSIC. This is the Wolfe book referenced all throughout the film, "The Hours", starring Nicole Kidman as Virginia. This is an iconic piece of literature and is a wonderful read, though dark, as one would expect. Shipping was very fast and the book arrived in perfect condition.

Woolf's switching off from the thoughts of one character to the thoughts of another is so unique that it takes getting used to, yet it is quite effective and her writing often veers into sublimity.

I originally purchased this book for a women's literature class. Not only was this class one of the best classes I have ever taken but, this book was phenomenal. It is a challenging read because it is written in a stream of consciousness style that alternates between characters there are tens of characters perspectives throughout the story it is both invigorating to the story, and a novelty in the

literary world (especially for the time it was written.) Virginia Woolfe's masterful craft allows the reader to immerse themselves in the world of Mrs. Dalloway. Woolfe sheds a necessary light on the importance of women's spheres in a post-war English landscape.

This is a very difficult read as it is stream of consciousness writing. It might be considered one of the first feminist books written and it does give a sense of the period.

Initially, I doubted that I could find the title character sympathetic - - a rich English woman giving a party. But Woolf weaves a fascinating fabric of characters, their accidental interactions, collisions, and near misses with one another. The subtle changes in point of view and the seamless alternations between internal monologue and actual dialogue and action takes a bit of getting used to, but I grew to enjoy it. Lovely, lovely story.

Though there are some passing resemblances to Jane Austen, the comedy of manners, and Victorian narrative satire, this is a modernist novel and a fairly accessible introduction to Woolf, unless the reader is overly impatient or tone-deaf. Woolf creates a character's interior life through a virtuosic, highly mobile third-person narrator, who might be thought of as the character's "persona," not merely "expressing" the character's thoughts but "mirroring" how the character perceives him or herself as seen by others. Moreover, the indefinite pronouns can shift unexpectedly or occur in too close proximity to make identification easy or even definite. As a result, the reader has to work overtime to achieve entrance into the mind of the "right" character while simultaneously sensing the liquid, interpenetrating and shared qualities of human identity itself. And finally there's that tone, now soft, now loud, and rarely without irony. Woolf makes it fairly easy on the reader with the broad, sardonic strokes she uses to paint the practically villainous Sir William Bradshaw, the eminent psychiatrist viewed by many (especially himself) as the scientific high priest of this cross-section of deluded London luminaries; and she's equally nasty to her other "villain," Miss Kilman, a repressed and embittered born-again Christian who, like Sir William, lives by the code of "conversion," Woolf's euphemism for those powerful personalities who are bent upon breaking, controlling and dominating the will of anyone not strong enough to resist them. The other portraits are more subtle, requiring the reader either to hear the soft, nuanced ironical tones or risk missing both the social satire and the character. Woolf's targets range, perhaps not surprisingly, from the pretense, pride, and hypocrisy of an out-of-touch social stratum that clings to the "orderly" past; to the arrogance of modern medical "science"; to, more surprisingly, the suffocating alternatives offered by both religion

and love. She uses the term "Human Nature" ironically, making it refer to those individuals who cannot see with understanding, empathy or vision, substituting for "life" the ego's own conventional, reductive and limited sense of a world that's all surface and order. Readers lured to this novel because of Cunningham's "The Hours" (novel or film) may be disappointed or quickly frustrated. Moving from Cunningham to Woolf is a bit like going from Fitzgerald to Faulkner, or from Austen to Shakespeare. What you immediately notice is the far greater range and more inclusive thematic focus and, most importantly, the sheer power and vitality of the prose (from fluid motion to dynamic rush). Woolf--like Joyce, Faulkner, and Shakespeare--employs a syntax that can cause the head to spin and the earth: she's a writer who represents not merely individual characters but captures a microcosm of life not to mention the life of language itself. The greatest challenge "Mrs. Dalloway" presents to a first-time reader is never to let up. It's essential to stay with Clarissa throughout her entire day, finally becoming a fully engaged participant in the party itself--the final thirty pages of the novel, which contain some of Woolf's best writing. Especially critical is the extended moment, almost 20 pages into the party scene, when Clarissa, like Septimus, walks to the window and has her epiphany. It's a moment highly reminiscent of Gabriel Conroy's singular internal struggle and ultimate attainment of vision in the closing paragraphs of "The Dead" (Woolf was not especially fond of Joyce, but it's hard to believe she was not influenced by him). At that moment, Clarissa sees her affinity and even oneness with Septimus, a character who suffers internally but is capable of resisting the worse alternative of the "cures" offered by Dr. Bradshaw, one of the guests at Clarissa's own party. The insight produces action: one character chooses death; the other, life. But Woolf enables us to see these apparently opposite choices as existential cognates: both characters make choices that enable them to save their souls. (The "Death of the Soul" is a theme introduced early in the novel by the insightful Peter, a "failure" by society's standards and his own admission and someone who cannot get the better of his fixations--on the irretrievable past and his own youth. By the story's end, it is not Peter but Clarissa who presents a whole and integrated self, capable of separating the illusory from the real, of the once dependent "Mrs. Dalloway" from the newly enlightened "Clarissa." Cunningham is a first-rate stylist and craftsman who can tell a story that's moving and evocative, a narrative, moreover, that connects with today's readers by affirming the choices available to the self. But it feels like a mechanical assembly next to the vibrant novel that is its source and inspiration. Ms. Woolf, like her character Clarissa, knows how to throw a party.

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