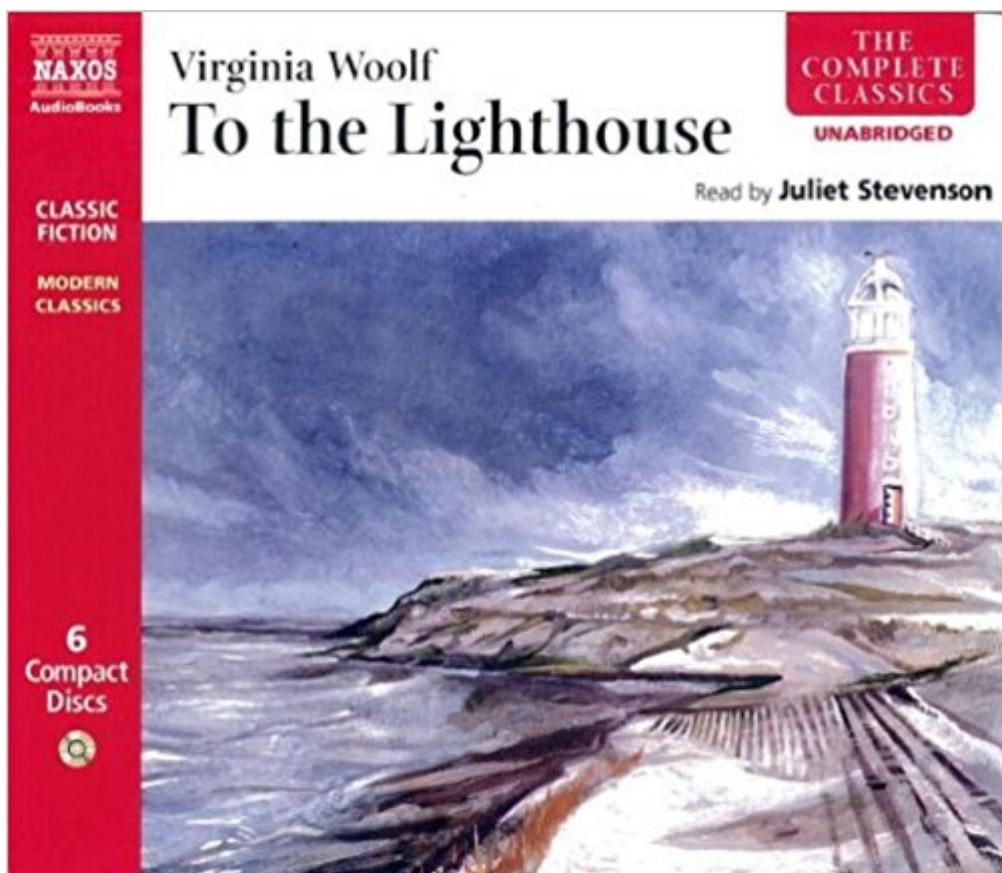


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# To The Lighthouse (Complete Classics)



## Synopsis

Just before the First World War, the Ramsay family go to their holiday home in the Hebrides, bringing several guests with them. While they are there, one of the children wants to visit a lighthouse. After a ten year gap, during which the war wreaks its havoc on Europe, one of the guests returns to the house and another trip to the lighthouse is proposed. Told from multiple viewpoints, in language that is precise, delicate and allusive, *To the Lighthouse* is a landmark work of English fiction. Virginia Woolf explores perception and meaning in some of the most beautiful prose ever written, minutely detailing the characters' thoughts and impressions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. British actress Juliet Stevenson makes for a better reader of Woolf's words than Nicole Kidman's Oscar-winning turn as Woolf in *The Hours*. Stevenson carefully sorts through Woolf's famously tangled modernist masterpiece about the interior lives of a well-to-do British family, and the ways in which the First World War permanently damaged European society. She reads in an amplified hush, her exaggeratedly formal British diction adding poignancy to the sense of dislocation and disorder that marks the book's transition from pre- to postwar. Her reading is quietly, carefully precise, and that precision is a solid complement to Woolf's own measured, inward-looking prose. (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Mrs Ramsay (wife of a distinguished philosopher, mother of eight, and a sympathetic hostess) provides the heartbeat of a shabby-grand holiday house in the Hebrides and at the same time ceaselessly gauges the secret rhythms of its many intertwined pulses. Hers is the dominant interior monologue of this pre-first-world-war interlude. Other voices (most notably that of unmarried artist Lily Briscoe) fade in and out, and Juliet Stevenson turns this haunting story, in which nothing really happens, into a tone-poem of delicately nuanced probings into human relationships. The mood deepens when the neglected house is revisited, post-war, by surviving members of the holiday party, who must ultimately confront 'that loneliness that was the truth about things' - Karen Robinson, *The Sunday Times* Nicole Kidman in *The Hours* may have raised the doyenne of Bloomsbury bluestockings' literary profile for a new generation of readers, but many people still consider Virginia Woolf's writing difficult and dated. It is. You either go along with descriptions such as, the spring, without a leaf to toss, bare and bright like a virgin fierce in her chastity, scornful in her purity, was laid out on fields, wide-eyed and watchful, and entirely careless of what was done, or thought, by the beholders...A", or you don't. Somehow, though, when 's read in a voice as sensitive and intelligent as Juliet Stevenson's, you appreciate why critics have said that this, her best-known novel, contains some of the most beautiful prose ever written. Just as well, because there isn't much plot. The action, such as it is, takes place in the holiday home of the Ramsay family, on a Hebridean island before and after the great war. Mrs Ramsay is beautiful, Mr Ramsay difficult, their eight children relatively interesting, their house guests more so. It's the relationships that count, constantly shifting and elusive, dependent on a glance, a trick of light, an inflection of tone. Naxos does an abridged version, but don't be tempted. Woolf is all or nothing. - Sue Arnold, *The Guardian* Thinking about my own reaction to *To the Lighthouse*, I enjoyed it more because of Juliet Stevenson's reading of it. She carried me along in the middle section when I was losing my way. And then I got fired up for it again. What the audiobook did was to impose some additional (and quite helpful) structure on the book. For example the last four tracks are called In the boat, Perspective, Approaching and Arriving. - Pete, *Couch trip blog*

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.....

Virginia Woolf's 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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