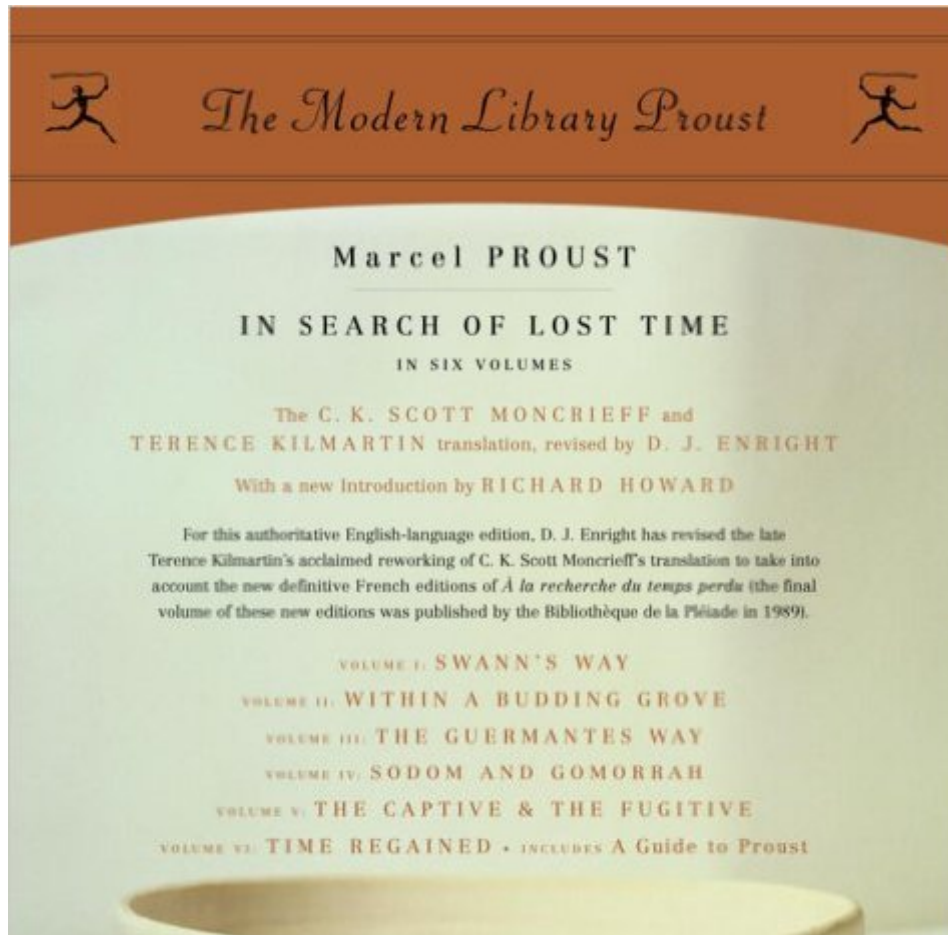


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In Search Of Lost Time: Proust 6-pack (Proust Complete)



Synopsis

For this authoritative English-language edition, D. J. Enright has revised the late Terence Kilmartin's acclaimed reworking of C. K. Scott Moncrieff's translation to take into account the new definitive French editions of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (the final volume of these new editions was published by the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade in 1989).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Depending on how you look at it, this seven-volume masterpiece is the most beautiful work on human consciousness, or the most overstated piece on time and memory. Jorge Luis Borges might have had Proust in mind when, horrified at the time and effort required to write long novels, he instead decided to write short reviews of imagined long novels. Whatever the energy expended in the production, the reading is strangely without arduous labor. One does not "plough" through Proust; I would never have ploughed through anything for 12 long months. Instead, I found myself pleasurably swept along by Proust's meandering stream. Of all great novelists, Proust to me was the easiest to read, easy in the sense that, for most of the year, I was unconscious of the effort of reading. When pressing matters intruded into my life, I would leave Proust aside for many weeks at a time, but only to return to him as one returns to wearing one's favourite shirt. Perhaps this weird sense of effortlessness and, at the same time, finding it absolutely indispensable, is a function of its main concern, which is Time and Memory. There are no plot devices to push the reader forward. Instead the Time-Narrative is filled with the inanities of the quotidian. A shaft of sunlight falling into

the bedroom can take up many pages. A smell, a taste, can open up enormous floodgates of memory. Of Proust it may be said that he could turn an egg upside down and write a book about it. His persistence with a certain image or an object is astonishing. It reminds me of one those famous Impressionist paintings of haystacks seen under different lights. Among the first things that struck me about this novel is its paradoxical nature: It is both intimate and epic at the same time.

I've just finished reading *The Search for Lost Time* and I'd like to share a few thoughts. First, commit to reading the whole thing, all seven volumes, all million+ words. However if the commitment frightens you (as it should) first read *Swann's Love*, the middle part of the first volume. Second, if you commit don't be afraid to take a break and leave the book aside. I began reading it fifteen years ago, and read *Swann's Love* several times before finally getting a one volume omnibus and reading the whole thing. It took me eight months, during which I freely allowed myself to read other books. Third, don't read Alain de Botton's *How Proust Can Change Your Life* until you've reached the final volume. It's a wonderful book, but if you want to read the *Search*, then De Botton's little book is a "digestif" that will help you put Proust in perspective. Fourth, you don't have to read Proust. No one does. If you don't enjoy reading the *Search*, leave it alone. Proust never liked the title "*The Search for Lost Time*" and I think he might have actually preferred the now discredited original English translation title "*Remembrance of Things Past*".* In French *Lost Time* (*Temps Perdu*) implies a waste of time, and Proust was very conscious of having wasted the first forty years of his life. Lastly, I wouldn't worry too much about the translation. I read the *Search* in French and it struck me that translating Proust wouldn't be much harder than reading him. The essence of Proust's style is not dramatic rhetoric, it is patient and painstaking descriptions and explanations. He wants the reader to understand something very complex and subtle: his or her own self. You'll find the drama in his philosophy.

This is a review by an amateur reader for amateur literati. I'm 71. I am not taking a college literature class (although I am college educated and have an M. D. degree, if that means anything); I'm not a professor, and I don't hang out in book clubs. Lately, after years of laziness and negligence, I've at last read about 50 "important" books to catch up on what I have missed, and, notably for me, at last, after fear of commitment, have recently finished Proust's magnum opus to see what the fuss was all about. I read it straight through over a 9 month period, in parcels of minutes to hours, usually in the quiet time before retiring. In an effort to give my straight unbiased comments I have not read any the reviews here. The Modern Library 6 book cased edition by translators Moncrieff, Kilmartin, and

Enright, turned out to be more than good; it was a delightful, easy style, not obscure or convoluted; you readily could appreciate Proust's incredibly detailed yet smooth, almost poetic style, with his superb attention to psychological detail in how one thinks, feels and reacts to events and memory. I will not go much into the plot or the literary stature of the book as I am sure it has all been covered elsewhere quite capably. I will say the main theme is the close critical observation of the social life of the era, the pretensions of the very rich and the competing social climbers, and more significantly, the conveying of one's life to such an extent that it almost takes over your own; you may well be lured into taking one reality for the other. Did I get everything out of the book I could have? No. Why?

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