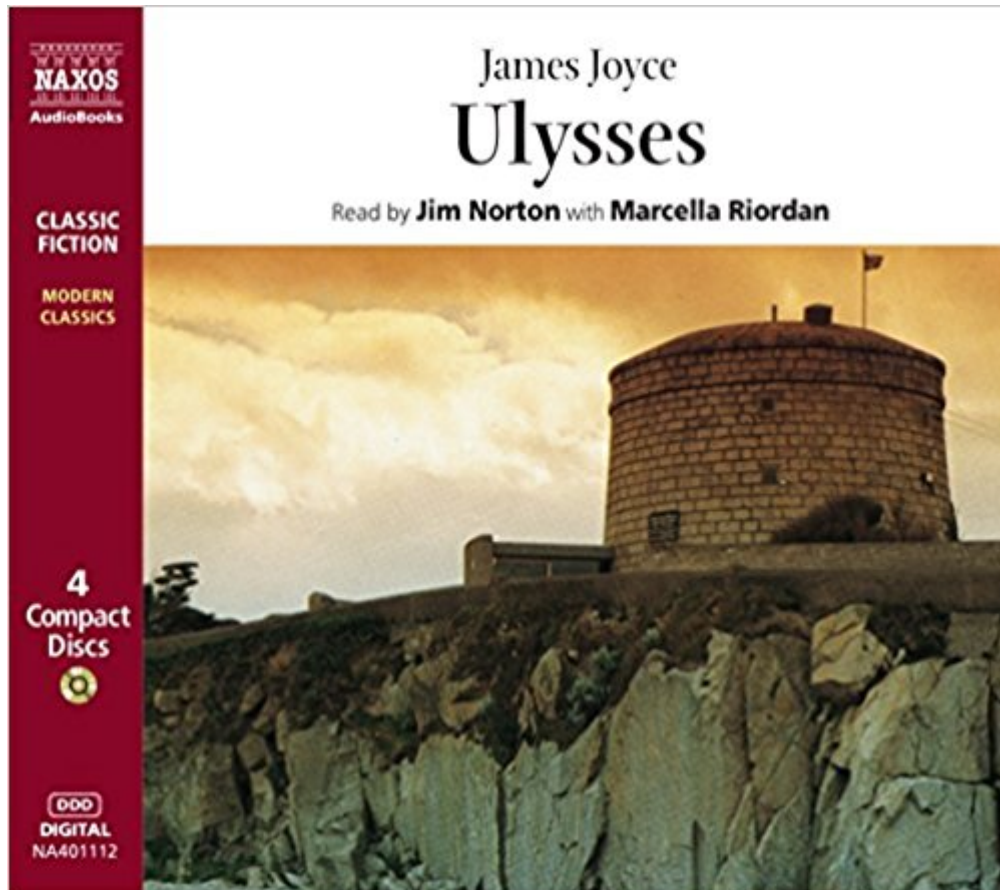




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Ulysses (Modern Classics)



Synopsis

Leopold Bloom wanders through Dublin, talking, observing, musing -- and always remembering Molly, his passionate, wayward wife. Set in the shadow of Homer's *Odyssey*, internal thoughts give physical reality extra color and perspective.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Naxos Records; Abridged edition (March 1, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9789626340110

ISBN-13: 978-9626340110

ASIN: 9626340118

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 1 x 4.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars 1,131 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,799,893 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in [Books > Books on CD](#) > Authors, A-Z > (J) > Joyce, James #807 in [Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Classics](#) #4771 in [Books > Books on CD > General](#)

Customer Reviews

Ulysses has been labeled dirty, blasphemous, and unreadable. In a famous 1933 court decision, Judge John M. Woolsey declared it an emetic book--although he found it sufficiently unobscene to allow its importation into the United States--and Virginia Woolf was moved to decry James Joyce's "cloacal obsession." None of these adjectives, however, do the slightest justice to the novel. To this day it remains the modernist masterpiece, in which the author takes both Celtic lyricism and vulgarity to splendid extremes. It is funny, sorrowful, and even (in a close-focus sort of way) suspenseful. And despite the exegetical industry that has sprung up in the last 75 years, *Ulysses* is also a compulsively readable book. Even the verbal vaudeville of the final chapters can be navigated with relative ease, as long as you're willing to be buffeted, tickled, challenged, and (occasionally) vexed by Joyce's sheer command of the English language. Among other things, a novel is simply a long story, and the first question about any story is: What happens?. In the case of *Ulysses*, the answer might be Everything. William Blake, one of literature's sublime myopics, saw the universe in a grain of sand. Joyce saw it in Dublin, Ireland, on June 16, 1904, a day distinguished by its utter normality. Two characters, Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, go about

their separate business, crossing paths with a gallery of indelible Dubliners. We watch them teach, eat, stroll the streets, argue, and (in Bloom's case) masturbate. And thanks to the book's stream-of-consciousness technique--which suggests no mere stream but an impossibly deep, swift-running river--we're privy to their thoughts, emotions, and memories. The result? Almost every variety of human experience is crammed into the accordion folds of a single day, which makes *Ulysses* not just an experimental work but the very last word in realism. Both characters add their glorious intonations to the music of Joyce's prose. Dedalus's accent--that of a freelance aesthete, who dabbles here and there in what we might call Early Yeats Lite--will be familiar to readers of *Portrait of an Artist As a Young Man*. But Bloom's wistful sensualism (and naive curiosity) is something else entirely. Seen through his eyes, a rundown corner of a Dublin graveyard is a figure for hope and hopelessness, mortality and dogged survival: "Mr Bloom walked unheeded along his grove by saddened angels, crosses, broken pillars, family vaults, stone hopes praying with upcast eyes, old Ireland's hearts and hands. More sensible to spend the money on some charity for the living. Pray for the repose of the soul of. Does anybody really?" --James Marcus --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

"The greatest novel of the century" -- Anthony Burgess * Observer * "Ulysses is a work of high genius" * Independent, 1922 * "The Odyssey, the Divine Comedy and Hamlet whisper their way through its pages: and Ulysses is their equal at every turn..." -- Simon Barnes * The Times * "Ulysses, with its comic-epic tapestry, took fiction deeper than ever into the raucous carnival of everyday life" * Independent * "[The 1974 version] fixes 5,000 errors involving punctuation, omitted words, phrases, and even entire sentences" * New York Times * --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Ulysses: the literary reader's favorite and the casual reader's frustration. It is a difficult book to read - if the experts are right, the difficulty is worth it. Nonetheless, it remains difficult, and for that, any judgement based on the usual "good story - well told" criterion will be less than fair to this masterpiece. My first attempt ended 43 years ago on page 38 (the bookmark was still there.) But the book can't be ignored it is on nearly every "100 greatest books ever written list: there are many 'bests' lists and Ulysses is usually in the leadoff, or #2 spot - that doesn't happen by chance! The difficulty with

this read is that the reader is often simply listening to the protagonists thoughts presented in stream-of-consciousness style, while Joyce is constantly playing with the language; English, French, Latin even Italian, and he plays with the characters and other authors, even his own prior work, and philosophies are explored, and all-the-while the story is an allegory of Homer's (the Greek, not Simpson) "Odyssey". And yet, still in the back of the mind, you just can't help but wonder if the myopic little Jimmy J. was just having it on with all of us. In fact, he said himself... "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality." (Joyce's reply for a request for a plan of Ulysses, as quoted in James Joyce (1959) by Richard Ellmann.) Apropos the game of baseball, for which it has been said, "There's a whole lot of stuff going on out there" (which the uninitiated is unable to see). I didn't see all that Joyce had to say (yep uninitiated!) but I saw enough to recognize the enormous importance of this book. If I may modify the definition of 4-stars from "I Like it" to "I Admire it", then I can make the rating system work for this read. If you are a reader, you will want to read this book someday - but wait until you are ready to concentrate on it: Joyce does not throw slow-pitch, its all curves, sliders and cutters and nasty sinkers! If you strike out, its your own fault, not his. The story line is a walk through Dublin on the day of June 16th 1904 where we follow the separate strolls of Stephen Dedalus, a budding poet and Leopold Bloom, an advertisement salesman, till they meet in the evening, go on a drunk together then separate onto their own paths again. Simple story? Sure, but you'd better pay attention because, "there's a whole lot of stuff going on out there!"

It is a classic, it is lengthy, it is written well. The content might not be everyone's cuppa tea. I use this more as a literary reference to style than for content. In that regard it is wonderfully done. Wiki for spoilerCliff notes for ease of digestion.

Reading this is work, but joyful work. My father loved this and bought print copies three times in his life, exhorting me to read it. I sat with the audio book in my ears and this copy in my eyes while regularly reading the web sites that discuss what is happening in each chapter. Some chapters are a joyful romp others are tedious. I think it helps a lot to read all kinds of supporting documents like

annotations that translate the Latin, French, German and Italian. Or maybe you are fluent in all that and don't need any help. Well worth the work.

This is an almost 100 year old book that crosses some very important ground in literature. It has been one of the most iconic books of its time and it is credited with being the 1st of its kind. You can read more here: [...] where it summarizes each section with details enough to help you decide to read it and the importance it was to literature in its time. It is a required reading for almost all high school students. I think there are lots of great books but this is one that almost everyone has heard of in one form or another.

I am now of the opinion, since I've tried it both ways, that like the Wake, Joyce's magnum opus should be read in groups and discussed, because a room full of varied perspectives and differing contextual and textual knowledge is far superior to one person's frame of reference, however seemingly erudite you think you are. Ulysses explodes all monomaniacal concepts of time, history, and gender (male gender, anyway, my only criticism is that the female portrayals, even the great Molly Bloom, rely a little too heavily on stereotype). It stages postcolonial subjectivity almost a hundred years before Homi Bhabha coined the terminology. It riffs on every literary form imaginable and some previously unimagined. This hybrid text is sheer magic, lyrical like a poem, rich and allusive like an allegory, the power of Joyce's language at its zenith. It demands active reading, and I consider finishing it the greatest accomplishment of my intellectual life.

This is the best anti-epic ever written. A hero's epic, without a hero. The drama of an everyday man spending one of his every days. With all its intrigue and monotony. My favorite book, and I side with those that argue this is the greatest novel of the 21st century. A warning to all reading, this is not a night-stand book. Best to be read in longer intervals (1 hour at a time for example) so you can get into the writing style. The book also has one of the highest concentrations of English vocabulary so non-native speakers beware. Finally, everyone I have recommended this book to has struggled to get into the flow of the writing -- in most cases it takes the first 100 pages for people to really get into it but all native speakers I have recommended it to have loved it by the end. Read it. Enjoy it. Don't read footnotes, just let it pull you into the world the first time. You can read the references to the Odyssey afterwards when you want to read it a second time.

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