

Marcel Proust
The Essential
Remembrance of Things Past

Selected and read by **Neville Jason**
with **Roy McMillan**



1	Marcel Proust's novel, <i>Remembrance of Things Past</i> ...	3:40
2	I: Swann's Way	4:33
3	On one such occasion...	5:28
4	For many years the narrator's memories...	8:59
5	Charles Swann has a neighbouring property...	7:16
6	Another neighbour, the distinguished composer Vinteuil...	9:03
7	<i>If the Meseglise Way was so easy</i> ...	12:08
8	II: Swann in Love	7:11
9	<i>If no arrangement had been made to go anywhere</i> ...	5:19
10	For a time, Swann is a welcome guest...	7:37
11	Swann's jealousy is further inflamed...	5:36
12	'My darling,' he began again...	6:48
13	Place Names; The Name	5:03
14	But Marcel's passionate attachment to Gilberte...	6:02
15	Many years later, Marcel pays a visit...	7:06
16	III: Within a Budding Grove, Part I	6:58
17	Meanwhile, Marcel continues his daily visits...	4:47
18	Illness prevents the narrator...	4:47
19	Marcel's pleasure at being a welcome guest...	7:57
20	These distractions make it all the harder...	5:07

21	Place Names; The Place	5:19
22	<i>Every few minutes the little train...</i>	5:30
23	<i>I threw myself into the arms of my grandmother...</i>	6:28
24	IV: Within a Budding Grove, Part II	9:44
25	Madame de Villeparisis introduces her nephew...	6:32
26	<i>Meanwhile, my grandmother had been making...</i>	6:30
27	Balbec is full of lovely girls.	5:58
28	One girl in particular intrigues Marcel.	7:22
29	Albertine and Marcel become friends...	6:16
30	The summer comes to an end...	5:01
31	V: The Guermantes Way, Part I	6:33
32	The Duke shows a different attitude...	8:02
33	Sometime later, Robert takes Marcel...	4:09
34	<i>'You might look the other way,' he warned her...</i>	6:43
35	At an afternoon party given by Mme. De Villeparisis...	6:17
36	<i>As he walked arm in arm with me and uttered...</i>	7:38
37	Marcel's mother has persuaded him...	7:23
38	VI: The Guermantes Way, Part II	6:13
39	Marcel's parents are away in Combray...	5:03
40	Once the Duchesse du Guermantes has observed...	7:31

41	Dinner with the Guermantes...	6:35
42	<i>After a moment's silence, I asked him...</i>	6:03
43	<i>So far I had never dreamt that...</i>	8:49
44	Having come to know the Duc de Guermantes...	6:44
45	VII: Sodom and Gomorrah, Part I	5:42
46	<i>The latter, deciding to cut short the preliminaries...</i>	7:24
47	Marcel hears that as soon as Swann arrived...	7:41
48	The Duke and Duchess give Marcel a lift home.	10:30
49	Marcel learns that Albertine has arrived...	4:23
50	Marcel's suspicions have been aroused...	7:18
51	<i>Notwithstanding these thoughts...</i>	5:33
52	VIII: Sodom and Gomorrah, Part II	7:41
53	A brilliant violinist, Charles Morel...	6:30
54	<i>I had just given Mme. Verdurin the message...</i>	7:06
55	During dinner, the conversation turns to the painter Elstir...	7:44
56	Charlus, mad about Morel...	6:18
57	<i>The Baron, foaming with rage...</i>	4:59
58	Marcel and Albertine spend their days...	5:51
59	Convinced that Albertine is sexually attracted to women...	3:05
60	IX: The Captive, Part I	5:04

61	Although Albertine is, in principle...	7:14
62	Morel has become engaged...	6:02
63	Marcel conceals Albertine's presence...	5:35
64	Albertine tells Marcel she is going to visit...	4:01
65	Albertine agrees to give up her plan...	6:01
66	Albertine and Andrée have gone to the theatre...	4:15
67	For many years, Marcel has been a friend...	4:34
68	<i>The circumstances of his death...</i>	5:56
69	X: The Captive, Part II	4:10
70	This evening's party at the Verdurins'...	5:18
71	Mme. Verdurin's anger with Charlus...	6:06
72	At the end of the party...	7:57
73	Charlus, despite having been sworn to secrecy...	6:08
74	When Marcel returns home...	7:45
75	As their conversation develops...	6:23
76	They resume going on drives together...	6:10
77	XI: The Fugitive	5:33
78	Marcel learns that Albertine has gone...	6:19
79	Having failed in his attempt to get Albertine...	5:52
80	Marcel's grief is complete...	5:08

81	Marcel questions Aimee...	5:23
82	At the Duchesse du Guermantes'...	7:38
83	Soon after Albertine's death...	6:12
84	Robert and Gilberte are married...	7:11
85	XII: Time Regained	6:15
86	Gilberte left Paris for Combray...	6:05
86	Marcel meets the Baron du Charlus...	4:48
88	Driven by thirst and curiosity...	7:23
89	Jupien finds Marcel...	7:59
90	After spending several years in a sanatorium...	8:27
100	When Marcel enters the drawing room...	4:57
101	Having been unafraid of death...	5:13

Total time: 9:47:56

Marcel Proust

(1871–1922)

The Essential

Remembrance of Things Past

Remembrance of Things Past (À la Recherche du temps perdu) is one of the longest books in the canon of literature, and many readers are reluctant to embark on such a time-consuming journey. But those who do are seldom disappointed. Proust's wisdom, humour and observation of human behaviour make him an ideal travelling companion, one capable of enriching our lives.

Marcel Proust was born in Paris in 1871 into a well-to-do middle class family. His father Adrien Proust was a renowned physician, and his mother Jeanne Weil a highly-cultivated member of a family of Jewish bankers. From an early age Proust knew he would be a writer, but he was slow to embrace his destiny. He was nearly 40 before he began the work by which he would be remembered,

À la Recherche du temps perdu. The English title of *Remembrance of Things Past* comes from C.K. Scott Moncrieff's original English translation, and is a quote from one of Shakespeare's sonnets, but literally translated Proust's title means *In Search of Lost Time*.

And Time is the major theme which runs through the book – time, the inexorable march of which the author/narrator manages to suspend when, triggered by certain sense-memories, he relives experiences from the past. Such incidents recur several times in the book, but best known is the episode in which the taste of a Madeleine cake and a sip of lime-flower tea bring flooding back the Narrator's hitherto forgotten memories of his childhood. The experience described in this passage has been so widely recognised

that even those who have never read Proust's book are likely to describe such moments as 'Proustian'.

If these incidents in which we relive past experiences may overcome Time itself, they require to be preserved by Art. And Proust recognised that Art is the foremost means of combating the great destroyer, Time. The writer was a lifelong invalid, one who had lived under the shadow of death since his first near-fatal asthma attack at the age of nine. But he understood that the means of overcoming the threat of annihilation lay in his own hands.

Why then was he so slow to undertake the work that was to overcome his mortality? The phrase 'lost time' in the title has a secondary meaning, that of 'time wasted'. Despite his illness Proust had a gregarious nature and loved society. His charm and intellect made him a popular figure at receptions, balls and salons, and frequently the attraction of the social whirl was stronger than the call to his desk.

But even during his youth as a fashionable man-about-town Proust never

ceased to pursue his literary ambitions. He wrote for literary reviews, embarked on an unfinished novel, produced a book of short stories, and, with his mother's help, made a French translation of Ruskin's essays. In retrospect, however, whatever he produced seems to have been in preparation for his great work.

Proust's relationship with his mother informs one of the major themes of *Remembrance of Things Past*. The Narrator's childhood need of his mother's goodnight kiss before he is able to rest, extending even into his adult life, was undoubtedly Proust's own experience. The love and adoration he felt for his mother was so great that on her death he suffered a severe mental breakdown. And yet, despite his grief, Proust was given a new freedom when his mother died. At last he could write about an aspect of his life which as long as she lived had had to remain secret.

At the time, homosexuality was outlawed; one notorious victim of society's revenge, Oscar Wilde, was a friend of Proust's. It can be no coincidence that Proust's mother died in 1905, and that

he began writing *Remembrance of Things Past* some two years later. Homosexuality, both male and female, is represented in Proust's volume *Sodom and Gomorrah*, *The Cities of the Plain*.

The 'Two Ways', which the Narrator and his family take on their country walks, are presented as geographical designations, but are open to deeper interpretation. The first, Swann's Way, leads past the property of Charles Swann; the other, The Guermantes Way, skirts the property of the aristocratic Guermantes family. Swann is a Jew, whose elegance and social distinction make him acceptable in an anti-Semitic society. The Guermantes represent the ancient aristocracy of the Faubourg St. Germain. Proust – who was urban Jewish on his mother's side, rural French on his father's, a bourgeois fascinated by the aristocracy, publicly heterosexual but privately homosexual, a gentle soul purportedly given to sadistic impulses – may easily be seen as leading a dual life, a life split into two 'ways'.

If the Narrator in the book is clearly recognisable as the author, the inspirations behind his characters are also easily

identified in his contemporaries. The Baron de Charlus was based on the eccentric poet Count Robert de Montesquiou, Swann on the art critic Charles Haas, Odette, the courtesan Laure Hayman, Bergotte, the author Anatole France; and many others are wholly or partially based on real people. With regard to the models for the Narrator's lovers, Proust frequently transposes the male objects of his affection into female; thus his great love, his chauffeur Alfred Agostinelli, who perished in a plane crash, appears in the book as Albertine, who also comes to a tragic end.

Proust's personality is as many-faceted and unexpected as the characters in his book. Faced with the injustice of Dreyfus's conviction, Proust rallied support from every quarter. Insulted by a critic, he challenged him to a duel with pistols. And when finally he decided to begin writing his great work, he devoted his life completely to his task, writing through the night in the bedroom whose walls he had had lined with cork to keep out noise. His only fear was that death would prevent him from finishing his

work. But he was kept alive by his iron will, and with the last vestiges of his strength he managed to complete his task before death overtook him. In creating a work which has survived beyond his life span and which remains alive for future generations, Marcel Proust was to achieve his final victory over Time.

Written by Neville Jason



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company and the Royal Shakespeare Company as well as in films, TV and musicals. He is frequently heard on radio. For Naxos AudioBooks he has read *War and Peace*, *The Life and Works of Marcel Proust*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Once and Future King* and the part of Antonio in *The Tempest*.



Roy McMillan is a director, writer, actor and abridger. For Naxos Audiobooks he has read stories by Robert Louis Stevenson and the introductions to works by Nietzsche and the Ancient Greeks. He has directed readings of Hardy, Hopkins, Kipling, Milton and Blake; Austen, Murakami, Conrad and Bulgakov, among many others; and has written podcasts and sleevenotes, as well as biographies of Milton and Poe. He has also directed plays for Radio 3 and Radio 4.

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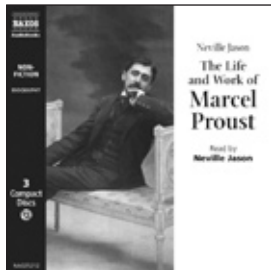
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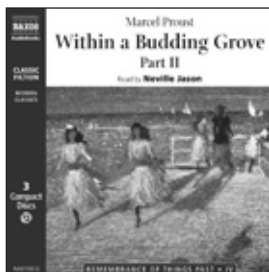
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Marcel Proust *The Essential* Remembrance of Things Past

Selected and read by **Neville Jason**
with **Roy McMillan**

Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* is one of the world's most celebrated books. And yet many people are daunted by its formidable size: it is more than 3,000 pages long. In this audio version Proust's masterpiece is presented in easily accessible form, the author's major themes and unique style are retained, and the key scenes are linked by a specially written narration. *The Essential Remembrance of Things Past* is an ideal introduction to one of the landmarks of modern European literature.



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