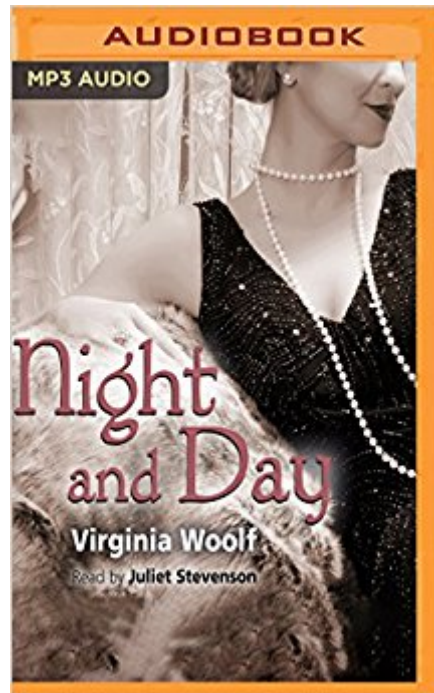




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# Night And Day



## Synopsis

Written before she began her experiments in the writing of fiction, Virginia Woolf's second novel, *Night and Day*, is a story about a group of young people trying to discover what it means to fall in love. It asks all the big questions: What does it mean to fall in love? Does marriage grant happiness? What is happiness? *Night and Day* is a conventional novel; however, it maps out for us the world of Virginia Woolf in its wondrous prose: for her it was the beginning, leading on to a prolonged engagement with her search for the means to express the "inner life."

## Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Naxos AudioBooks on Brilliance Audio; MP3 Una edition (April 12, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1522633936

ISBN-13: 978-1522633938

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.5 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 331 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #5,992,916 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #17 in [Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > \( W \) > Woolf, Virginia](#) #2025 in [Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Classics](#) #17300 in [Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Unabridged](#)

## Customer Reviews

'Together these ten volumes make an attractive and reasonably priced (the volumes vary between L3.99 and L4.99) working edition of Virginia Woolf's best-known writing. One can only hope that their success will prompt World's Classics to add her other essays to the series in due course.'

--Elisabeth Jay, Westminster College, Oxford, *Review of English Studies*, Vol. XLV, No. 178, May '94 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The edition is intended for literary scholars and students with an interest in Virginia Woolf, modernist literature, women's writing, and the history of the novel in the twentieth century. It is more thorough than any previous edition, as regards textual variants, explanatory notes, and the Introduction.

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A well-crafted book can linger in my mind long after it is finished, its words, sentences, scenes or

characters appearing in random spaces of my life, like the grocery store checkout line or in the car, prompting me to philosophize, laugh, smile, and frown. The novel *Night and Day* by Virginia Woolf is one such book. Although there is much in *Night and Day* to analyze, savor, or dislike—all equally valid reactions from a good read—one of the most memorable scenes takes place mainly in the consciousness of the family, and more specifically, in Katherine's consciousness. The catalyst for this scene, which is also the beginning of the book, is a visit from Ralph Denham, a poor man who wants to be rich. To him, Katherine Hilbery and her family have it all—wealth, property, position—without having to work for it. Despite appearances, not all is perfect within Katherine's family, and not for the typical reasons we see unfolding in a TV drama series. The situation is as follows: Katherine's grandfather, Richard Alardyce, was a great and important poet; and as with so many other, great, important poet men—Woolf is poking a little fun here—his biography must be written. Katherine and her mother have been tasked since birth with the writing of this biography. Woolf unfolds her narrative carefully, lulling the reader dreamily into the deep mire into which Katherine one day finds herself. At age 27, she and her mother still have no biography to show the world. Nevertheless, Katherine's view of her mother has been up to this point optimistic and sympathetic, even as she realizes how absurd the task has become for both of them. Her account of watching her mother at work: "These spells of inspiration never burnt steadily, but flickered over the gigantic mass of the subject as capriciously as a will-o'-the-wisp, lighting now on that point, now on that. It was as much as Katherine could do to keep the pages of her mother's manuscript in order, but to sort them so that the sixteenth year of Richard Alardyce's life succeeded the fifteenth was beyond her skill. And yet they were so brilliant, these paragraphs, so nobly phrased, so lightning-like in their illumination, that the dead seemed to crowd the very room. Read continuously, they produced a sort of vertigo, and set her asking herself in despair what on earth she [Katherine] was to do with them. But the book must be written. It was a duty that they owed the world, and to Katherine, at least, it meant more than that, for if they could not between them get this one book accomplished they had no right to their privileged position." (Pg. 30). The situation intensifies when we discover that Katherine is hiding what she truly feels passionate about, and prefers doing over writing: "[Katherine] would not have cared to confess how infinitely she preferred the exactitude, the star-like impersonality, of figures to the confusion, agitation, and vagueness of the finest prose. There was something a little unseemly in thus opposing the tradition of her family; something that made her feel wrong-headed, and thus more than ever disposed to shut her desires away from view and cherish them with extraordinary fondness." (Pg. 34). Her desire to do math and retreat into silence and thought

provides the bulk of a thin but tenacious little thread that runs through the entire book, hinted at only a few times—“as if the thinking of it in front of the reader is too much a kind of betrayal. This small, unassuming thread destabilizes her relationships—including her engagement to Rodney, who often observed Katherine within the strict confines of their position and endlessly misunderstood her, even if he did love her—and brings her finally to a place where she must decide for herself what to do. Thereafter a delightful sense of irony colors the entire story. Katherine, who clearly prefers “figures which she finds simple and clear, is herself perpetually enmeshed and paralyzed in the “confusion, agitation, and vagueness of the finest prose”; in this case, in Woolf’s own finest prose. Woolf as author becomes Greek god, inserting Katherine directly into the kind of story she would dislike reading, a life that has been dragged into a dark thicket of mismatched engagements, feelings that confuse and entangle, and only after all that emotional upheaval and pain and discomfort, a union with Ralph, the most turbulent, emotionally distressed character in the entire book. Her own expression of love comes in a “broken statement” (Pg. 430) and is filled with imagery of fire—“perhaps a symbol of the destruction such a partnership has wrought on her own day-to-day patterns up until this point. Yet with Ralph, there will be space for a different life in the form of a cottage where she can become the mathematician she wishes to be. And even though Katherine cannot describe or say to herself that she is falling in love, not very well, Woolf wonderfully describes the situation for the reader: “Moments, fragments, a second of vision, and then the flying waters, the winds dissipating and dissolving; then, too, the recollection from chaos, the return of security, the earth firm, superb and brilliant in the sun.” (Pg. 432) A subtle but satisfying ending.

Adeline Stephen aka Virginia Woolf holds her place and remains a puzzling enigma to most of her readers. Born in 1883, she was far in advance of most of her contemporary female authors. Her life was troubled after she lost her mother, then her father, at a young age. She married Leonard Woolf, a kindred spirit, in 1912. In 1917, they established the Hogarth Press which published many of Woolf’s novels, along with other notables, such as, T.S. Eliot. Virginia desperately needed a room (space) of her own. But, her fanciful flights and gripping internalization needed to be grounded. Virginia often used stream of consciousness style writing via her characters. She externalized essential dialogues, views, and mindset impressions. She has often been described as a feminist. She struck out mightily against male domination, and the established stereotyped image of grey, quiet mouse type women. *Night and Day* was Woolf’s second published novel. Again, she exercises her elastic mind using subjects of marriage, non-marriage and emancipated females, as well as,

women's suffrage. Decision, composure, contemplation and control were attributes of character, Katharine Hilbery. Most did not suspect that she was keenly observant giving off tiny sparks like an ancient jewel. This novel was Virginia Woolf's chance to explore and utilize her thoughts and emotions. These vivid portrayals were avant-garde for her day. Always on the edge. Some referred to Woolf as "a leprechaun at work." She has proven through her numerous books, and her life, that she was much more.

Parker's Jesse Stone series is always entertaining. This is not the strongest outing by far, the villain is lukewarm at best, but Parker was second to none in hard boiled detective fiction. His prose carries the story along even with the weak antagonist.

The writing is concise. Short chapters. Nice interweaving of back history and crime solving. No extraneous information. I recommend the series. I've not read the continuation books by another author after Mr. Parker's death, so I can't comment on whether they have the same rhythms.

I found the relationship of Katharine and Ralph to be frustrating, but it may have been the time and it's stuffy prim and proper ways. I am glad that everything became settled.

Great dialogue. Suspense. I like the continuity between books. Jesse Stone is a great character and Suit & Molly round out the crew.

A classic Jesse Stone with lots of quirky characters and a story that will make you sorry the novel has to come to an end.

Had to read this, I mean I had heard so much about Virginia Woolf and somehow had overlooked her when reading the classics. I must say, I was disappointed. I read other readers reviews and they spoke of the humor and character development. I consider myself fairly well read but never even smiled while reading this and I thought the characters were dry and closed off. Might be a good story to develop into a period film as the premise was interesting. Her other works must be better than this dull plodding book.

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