

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Virginia Woolf To the Lighthouse

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Read by **Juliet Stevenson**

CLASSIC
FICTION

MODERN
CLASSICS

6
Compact
Discs



NA686612D

1	The Window Chapter 1 'Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow...'	7:07
2	She turned with severity upon Nancy...	6:48
3	Insoluble questions they were...	4:48
4	'Let us all go!' she cried...	7:07
5	Chapter 2 'No going to the Lighthouse, James,' he said...	0:21
6	Chapter 3 'Perhaps you will wake up and find the sun ...'	4:51
7	Chapter 4 Indeed, he almost knocked her easel over...	5:59
8	They came there regularly...	7:08
9	'Oh, but,' said Lily, 'think of his work!'	6:53
10	Chapter 5 'And even if it isn't fine tomorrow...'	5:14
11	She had stood there silent...	4:39
12	Chapter 6 But what had happened?	7:12
13	It was a splendid mind...	7:41
14	Chapter 7 But his son hated him...	8:16

15	Chapter 8 He said nothing. He took opium...	4:54
16	Mrs Ramsay could have wished...	7:24
17	Chapter 9 Yes, Mr Bankes said, watching him go.	6:28
18	She now remembered what she had been going to say...	6:35
19	Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing!	6:34
20	Chapter 10 For Cam grazed the easel by an inch...	4:52
21	'Well, what does she want then?'	6:03
22	They all had their little treasures...	6:12
23	Chapter 11 No, she thought, putting together some of the pictures...	4:45
24	What brought her to say that...	4:01
25	Chapter 12 She folded the green shawl about her shoulders...	5:30
26	They had reached the gap...	7:36
27	Chapter 13 He had been to Amsterdam...	4:16
28	Chapter 14 Certainly, Nancy had gone with them...	6:07

29	It was not until they had climbed right up on to the top...	5:14
30	Chapter 15 'Yes,' said Prue, in her considering way...	0:12
31	Chapter 16 Well then, Nancy had gone with them...	7:41
32	Chapter 17 But what have I done with my life...	5:56
33	'Do you write many letters, Mr Tansley?'	6:38
34	'People soon drift apart,' said Mr Bankes...	6:41
35	There is a code of behaviour, she knew..	6:16
36	That the fishing season was bad...	5:33
37	Why could he never conceal his feelings?	5:50
38	It must have happened then...	6:59
39	He smiled the most exquisite smile...	6:38
40	Foolishly, she had set them opposite each other...	5:38
41	'Ah, but how long do you think it'll last...'	4:32
42	How odd to see them sitting there...	6:01

43	Chapter 18 As usual, Lily thought...	5:31
44	Then Cam must go to sleep...	6:40
45	Chapter 19 Of course, she said to herself...	7:35
46	Mrs Ramsay raised her head...	7:24
47	Time Passes Chapter 1 'Well, we must wait for the future to show...'	0:54
48	Chapter 2 So with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk...	3:27
49	Chapter 3 But what after all is one night?	3:17
50	Chapter 4 So with the house empty and the doors locked...	3:32
51	Chapter 5 As she lurched...	2:44
52	Chapter 6 The Spring without a leaf to toss...	6:52
53	Chapter 7 Night after night, summer and winter...	1:19
54	Chapter 8 Thinking no harm, for the family would not come...	5:06
55	Chapter 9 The house was left; the house was deserted ...	5:32
56	They drank their tea in the bedroom sometimes...	4:51

57	Chapter 10 Then indeed peace had come...	2:46
58	The Lighthouse Chapter 1 What does it mean then...	5:55
59	She fetched herself a chair...	7:04
60	Chapter 2 She seemed to have shrivelled slightly...	6:57
61	Instead, Mr Ramsay smiled...	6:53
62	Chapter 3 So they're gone, she thought...	7:15
63	Charles Tansley used to say that...	6:19
64	Chapter 4 The sails flapped over their heads...	6:03
65	Yes, the breeze was freshening...	6:30
66	And as sometimes happens...	4:53
67	Chapter 5 Yes, that is their boat, Lily Briscoe decided...	6:23
68	And this, Lily thought...	5:15
69	Suddenly, as suddenly as a star slides in the sky...	5:51
70	He wanted to go straight up to him...	5:47

71	Chapter 6 Macalister's boy took one of the fish ...	0:16
72	Chapter 7 'Mrs Ramsay!' Lily cried...	4:57
73	Chapter 8 They don't feel a thing there...	6:49
74	It was in this world...	4:45
75	Chapter 9 The sea without a stain on it...	0:41
76	Chapter 10 It was like that then, the island, thought Cam...	6:28
77	Chapter 11 So much depends then...	6:07
78	Here on the grass...	6:41
79	She had gone one day into a Hall...	6:32
80	But it tired Mrs Ramsay...	6:46
81	Chapter 12 Mr Ramsay had almost done reading...	6:04
82	They would soon be out of it...	5:54
83	Chapter 13 'He must have reached it...'	2:54

Total time: 7:39:25

Virginia Woolf

To the Lighthouse

In the traditional novel, the author was omniscient, and the story unfolded along lines that ran essentially from the beginning to the end, satisfying the readers' curiosity about the narrative, engaging their sympathy with the characters and usually coming to a conclusion that was as morally satisfying as it was clear. This moral sensibility was evidence of a broader sense of the morals of the time – a nicely rounded ending meant, or at least suggested, that the universe in which the events took place was one where such endings were right, proper and acceptable. Whether these ideas actually represented the moral code that governed the real rather than the fictional world is questionable. As Oscar Wilde pointed out: 'The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is

what Fiction means'. Despite the many attempts to subvert the standard form in the centuries prior to Woolf's novels, the overwhelming convention was to tell a story from start to finish and make sure the reader knows what is happening.

Virginia Woolf cared about conventions in literature; she certainly knew them extremely well. Her family was at the core of England's literary establishment – her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was an eminent editor, critic and biographer who had originally married Thackeray's daughter. Woolf herself was born in 1882, the child of Stephen's second marriage, to Julia Jackson, who had previously been married to Herbert Duckworth, and both parents brought children from their previous marriages. The concentration of artistic genes turned the household

into something of a hothouse – Gerald Duckworth went on to found a publishing company; Woolf's full sister, Vanessa, was a painter and designer; her brother Adrian was an author and psychoanalyst; brother Thoby was a founding member of the Bloomsbury Group. The house-guests were some of the greatest names then writing, such as Henry James and George Eliot; relatives were friends of Thomas Carlyle. But something of the intensity, and something in herself, was too much for Woolf, and her suffering from powerful mood swings was deeply affected by tragic family circumstances. Her half-sister was institutionalised; there are suggestions of abuse from her half-brothers; and the death of her mother (in 1895) and sister Stella (in 1897) led to the first of her nervous breakdowns. The second came when her father died in 1904, and required her brief hospitalisation.

But this combination of a profound literary background and extreme sensitivity is what led her to search for a new way of expressing things. She recognised

that the great novels of the past were able to express profound truths about human nature, but saw also that there was a need for a change. The old moral certainties could not be upheld any more, but she felt there was no clear way of demonstrating this in existing novel forms. Around her, there were clear attempts to recreate the novel (James Joyce's *Ulysses* was just one), but she was unconvinced by them, although recognised the validity of what they were trying to do. She did, however, believe that psychology, varied and uncertain perspectives, the individual character's response to a situation rather than an authorial *diktat* and a kind of flickering twilight rather than all-illuminating sun might be the way towards it. She, and all her circle, became the focus for the modernist movement, and especially the Bloomsbury Group, named after the area of London in which she and her family lived. It was another hothouse – politics, art, literature were all discussed and debated and disagreed on by intellectuals, critics, artists and writers. It was there Virginia

met her future husband – Leonard Woolf – a left-wing author and journalist – and married him in 1912. Between them, they founded the Hogarth Press and published work that suited them by the likes of T. S. Eliot, C. Day Lewis, Robert Graves and E. M. Forster. And of course the works of Virginia herself.

To the Lighthouse sits almost exactly in the middle of her publishing life, appearing in 1927 after *Mrs Dalloway* and before *Orlando*. It is a work that details the apparently trivial with such acute perception that the tiniest observation, the smallest social nicety, is given full weight because of its effect on the narrator and – because we are so much closer to the characters – its effect on us. The story is told from different perspectives by different characters, but the movement between these narrators is implicit rather than explicit; the language and the ideas move between them seamlessly; and each person expresses the layers and digressions of thought and imagination as they explain what they see or are thinking. These

elusive shifts in people's relationships with themselves, with each other and the world are told in prose of mesmeric accuracy and fluidity. The plot itself, though by no means irrelevant, is not the driving force. It is the access to the interior world of the people in the story that is so absorbing. The story itself is relatively straightforward, and told in three parts. In the first, Mr and Mrs Ramsay bring their eight children and some house guests (including a philosopher and a painter) to their holiday home in the Hebrides. One of the children wants to go to the lighthouse, but the weather is bad. There is a proposal among the younger guests. A painting is begun; and there is a dinner party. In the second section, a period of ten years passes, during which the First World War takes place, several characters die, and the house is neglected and unused. However, the housekeeper and some friends put the house back in order in time for the painter (Lily Briscoe) to return to it. And in the third section, another trip to the lighthouse is proposed, and a painting is finished.

The style is almost like liquid; it is shifting, prismatic, allusive yet with perfect poise and direction, so that ideas and images can move between narrators. There is no one authorial voice, but the character of Mrs Ramsay dominates the first part, as Lily Briscoe does in the third. Even so, it has its roots in a concrete enough reality, with Mr and Mrs Ramsay being essentially Woolf's parents, and the Hebrides are the fictional representation of her family's holiday home in Cornwall – to such an extent that she transplanted some flora to the Hebrides, despite the fact they don't exist there. But perhaps Woolf's concern for creating a new way of writing was not the only faculty that influenced the intricacies of her descriptions of the mind's workings. Such deliberately revolutionary stylisms were as much a part of her own pained and complex psychology as her literary determination. She was married, and apparently very happily so; but it seems certain that she had sexual relationships with women (she was especially close to Vita Sackville-

West). And her position within her own society – one where stability of any sort was never a requirement for membership – did not offer her sufficient security to prevent her crippling mood swings. Maybe nothing could. In the end, in 1941, another bout of depression seemed to be approaching with the same speed and certainty of a German invasion; and she committed suicide by filling her pockets with stones and walking into the River Ouse in Sussex.

Even without her novels, on which most of her reputation now rests, her output was extraordinary – short stories, non-fiction, biographies, articles, criticism, polemics, lectures, journals, diaries, letters; and her life has influenced almost every aspect of social and cultural life in Europe and America. She not only published and promoted some of the most important writers in the 20th century, she was one; she did not just discuss doing away with the old moral vision, she lived a life away from it. She did not just recommend the changing of the outdated sexual

obligations that forced women into a submissive role, she lived such a life. She is heralded as a proto-feminist, a liberating force for women's rights, freedoms, equality and sexuality. She is a genuinely iconic figure in literary history. She created a new tradition, one with aims as grand as the old one she respected so much, but a new way of addressing them. Hers was an original voice, pained but exquisite, and as complex as the sea.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Juliet Stevenson has worked extensively for the RSC and the Royal National Theatre. She received an Olivier Award for her role in *Death and the Maiden* at the Royal Court, and a number of other awards for her work in the film *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. Other film credits include *The Trial*, *Drowning by Numbers* and *Emma*. She has recorded *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *To the Lighthouse* (abridged), *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park* (abridged), *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Stories from Shakespeare* and *Mansfield Park* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Cover picture: The Cocksdoorp Lighthouse, Texel, Netherlands, by John Erskine
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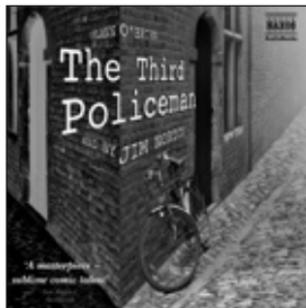
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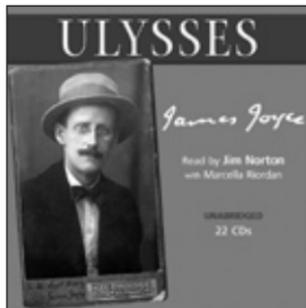
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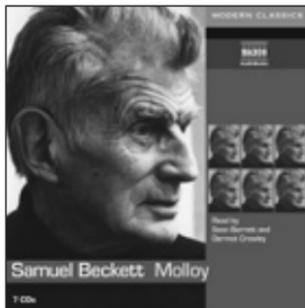
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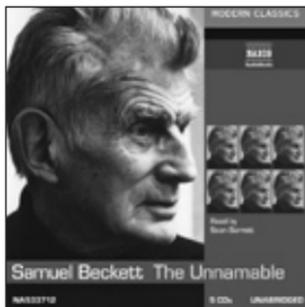
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Virginia Woolf

To the Lighthouse

Read by **Juliet Stevenson**

Just before the First World War, the Ramsay family go to their holiday home in the Hebrides, taking 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* gives unprecedented insight into the minds of the characters, as well as telling a broader story of personal and social change in the world after the war.

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.

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