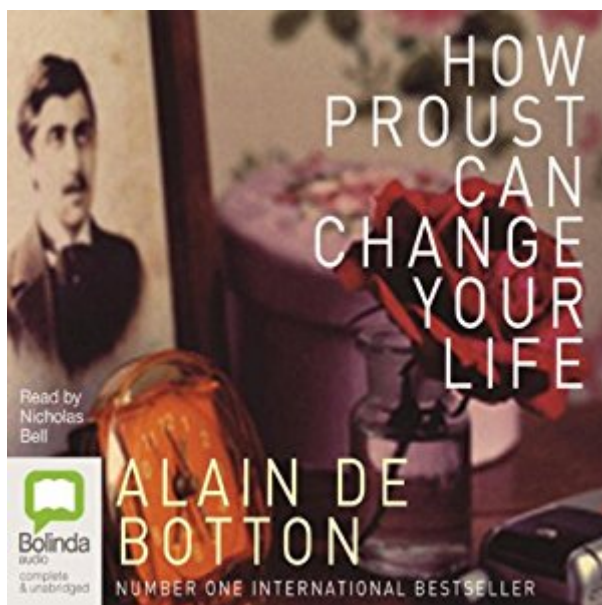


The book was found

How Proust Can Change Your Life



Synopsis

For anyone who ever wondered what Marcel Proust had in mind when he wrote the one-and-a-quarter-million words of *In Search of Lost Time* (while bedridden no less), Alain de Botton has the answer. For, in this stylish, erudite and frequently hilarious book, de Botton dips deeply into Proust's life and work - his fiction, letters, and conversations - and distils from them that rare self-help manual: one that is actually helpful. Here, tendered in prose almost as luminous as its subject's, is advice on cultivating friendships, suffering successfully, recognising love, and understanding why you should never sleep with someone on the first date. And here, too, is a generously perceptive literary biography that suggests that the master is as relevant today as he was in fin de siècle Paris.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Absolutely delightful, thought-provoking, educational and full of good humor. A new angle on mindfulness.

I have started liking Alain's book. He is a very good writer and you never get bored reading him.

This book took me a couple of chapters to grasp but it eventually hit me! These are great points about life and how we should live it.

Recommend. Wonderful take on old philosopher's words with writer's own extension of thoughts. I like that the writing not only shows the culture environment surrounding the philosopher at any particular time period but also the resultant mental and intellectual state of the philosopher at that time. Learned a lot.

I have never even thought of reading Proust, but following this I am reading Swann's Way. So this book succeeded in tempting me to read further, and it did that by examining the peculiar focus and detailed observations of Proust's work - and how that illuminates human behaviour, and our perception of the world around us.

This is probably the most approachable and happiest work on Proust ever written. It's a small book and easy to read, yet holds some nice surprises and insights. Some of the harsher reviews, I think, find fault with it for not being what it was never meant to be. At only 200 pages, with plenty of illustrations and blank spaces, it's no substitute for reading Proust, and it's not intended as a scholarly monograph. A few found the title deceptive, and were disappointed to discover it is not a self-help book. If you've read any of de Botton's other books, then you know he's intelligent, informed, cocky, irreverent and witty. Really an entertaining writer. He's also conceited, and probably speaks better French than most of his readers, which is always enraging, and if anyone wants to give him a one-star for that, I can certainly understand it. If you have a somber veneration for Proust, believe me, de Botton's flippant style is going to make you reach for the anti-acid tablets. Still, there is an absurd side to Proust's life, as Proust himself saw, and to be fair, de Botton reminds the reader, that as in the case of the artist Elstir, it was Proust's whole life, the grotesque as well as the sublime, that brought his art to bloom. Despite his flashy erudition de Botton makes grammar errors that would have sent Proust to Cabourg for his nerves. After awhile you wonder if the author doesn't purposely salt those in now and then just to give the book "sprezzatura" -- a kind of artistic nonchalance. I've read Proust, and about Proust, more than I have any author but Dickens, and I still found much I didn't know, lots of it trivia (Proust's phone number) but also fresh thoughts and new ways of looking at Proust's life and work. The book is meant to be fun, so take it for what it is. I'm glad I made time to read it.

This book deserves all the praise it has received. It does something I've never been able to do when talking to friends: it articulates the value of reading and studying literature. You don't have to have read *IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME* to enjoy this book. In fact, de Botton could probably have

substituted Joyce, Faulkner, or Woolf for Proust and produced a similar study. The self-help format seems appropriate (even if sardonically intended). De Botton seems to be directly addressing (and at times challenging) the earnestness of people who turn to books to improve themselves (and who expect books to show them the best way to improve those around them). My favorite chapters were "How to Suffer Successfully" and "How to Be a Good Friend." The final chapter, "How to Put Down Books," should probably be photocopied and stapled to the door of every library and bookstore. It cautions us against bibliolatriy. One tiny gripe. De Botton does not always identify the works he is quoting from. We don't need to know specific page numbers, but it would be nice to know if a quotation is from one of the volumes of *IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME*, or from an essay or letter. In one case, I wasn't sure if the quote was Proust's or Ruskin's.

Enlightening and entertaining. For a book on an author I didn't know and had never contemplated reading, what more can I ask for? Proust is now definitely on my to read list.

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