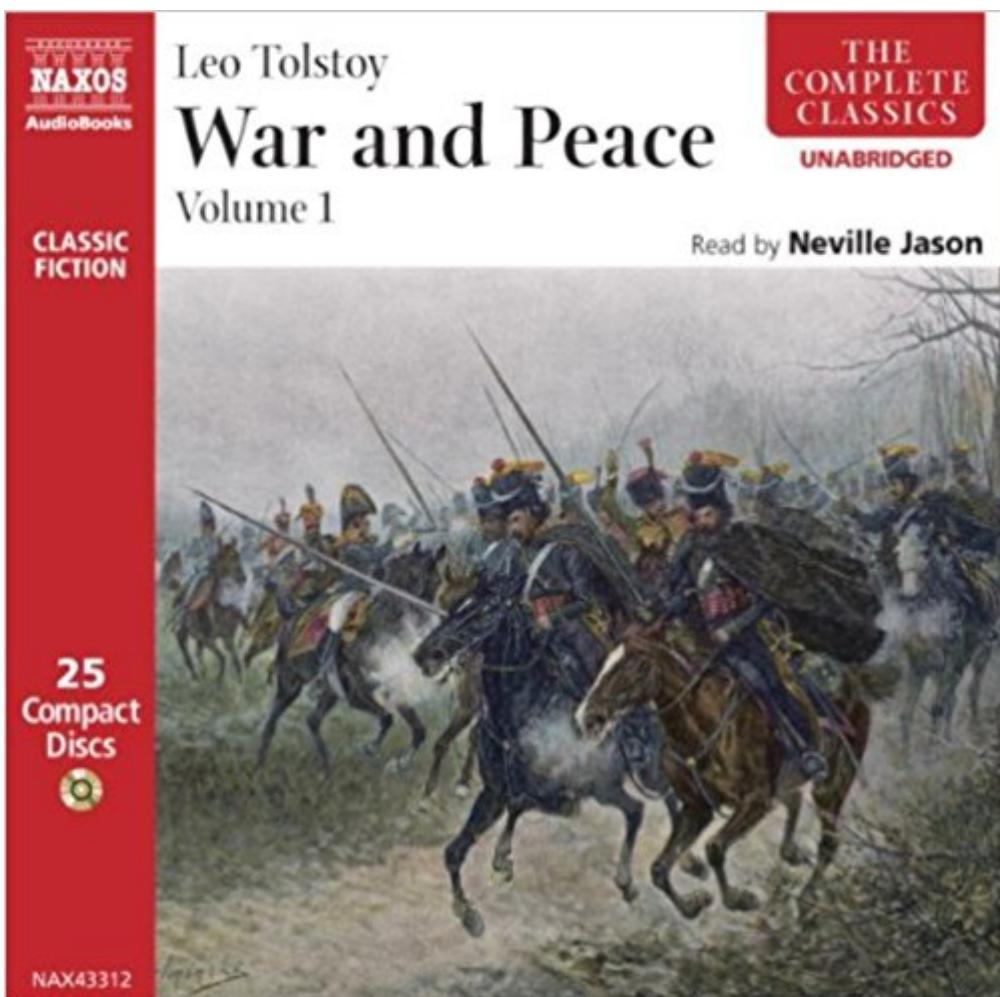


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War & Peace, Volume 1 (The Complete Classics)



Synopsis

"War and Peace" volume 1 is one of the greatest monuments in world literature. Set against the dramatic backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars, it examines the relationship between the individual and the relentless march of history. Here are the universal themes of love and hate, ambition and despair, youth and age, expressed with a swirling vitality which makes the book as accessible today as it was when it was first published in 1869. In addition it is, famously, one of the longest books in Western literature and therefore a remarkable challenge for any reader. Neville Jason read the abridged version of "War and Peace" and proved his marathon powers with his outstanding performance of Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past". These alone make him the ideal person to essay Tolstoy's epic. The recording will run to 55CDs, some 70 hours, and we have divided it into two volumes. Volume 2 is also available (ISBN 962-634-434-2).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

[Editor's Note: The following is a combined review of WAR AND PEACE Vols. 1 and 2.]--This reviewer derives a special pleasure listening to a good book that he's already read delivered by an excellent narrator. He can thus better appreciate values the performer extrapolates from the text. Such is the case with Neville Jason's mature rendering of Tolstoy's massive classic--25 CDs to Volume 1 alone--of the Napoleonic Wars in Russia. His efforts are abetted by an excellent, uncredited translation. Once you get used to Russians with British accents, he gives you a fresh and consistently insightful interpretation of the action, atmospheres, numberless characters, and author's apostrophes. Only his very young women ring a bit false. An accompanying booklet,

intended to help the listener keep characters and events straight, is unnecessary, thanks to Jason's skill. Y.R. Winner of AudioFile Earphones Award © AudioFile 2007, Portland, Maine-- Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine

This review is of the Audio book version of War an Peace, narrated by Neville Jason, here: A War & Peace 1. The audible.com version of the book is quite a bit more affordable than the CD Version. War and Peace is a book that I put off reading for quite a long time. I have to say that I regret not having read it earlier in life, as the characters are so very true to life, and the story, while specific to its time, has themes that are universal and timeless. As one familiar with the Aubrey-Maturin series by Patrick O'Brian, I found Tolstoy's Russia of the same time period to be startlingly familiar in many ways, and quickly became engrossed in the story. Listening to it in Audio book format only adds to the pleasure, as Neville Jason narrates each scene with superb timing, and is able to pitch his voice and change his tempo to put real "character" behind each character. It seems impossible, but he's able to portray both young and old women in a variety of circumstances in such a way that you ~never~ feel he's striking a false note, or tempt you to laugh at the voices he summons for them. The basic character of humanity apparently does not change. Tolstoy's asides (Such as "Like all young men, he was determined to make his opinion known.") are as true today as when he wrote them. The nature and actions of the many people within the book are never dull, sometimes moving, often very funny, and always authentic. I've purchased a printed version of War and Peace which I will look forward to re-reading from time to time, and may keep a few audio chapters handy for "impulse listening" in the future. By all means, take a listen or a read - War and Peace's reputation is wholly deserved.

"Well, Prince, so Genoa and Lucca are now just family estates of the Buonapartes. But I warn you, if you don't tell me that this means war, if you still try to defend the infamies and horrors perpetrated by that Antichrist--I really believe he is Antichrist--I will have nothing more to do with you and you are no longer my friend, no longer my 'faithful slave,' as you call yourself! But how do you do? I see I have frightened you--sit down and tell me all the news." - Anna Pavlovna in War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy. It was 1805 and the novel opens up at a reception given by Anna. With these words she greeted Prince Vasili Kuragin who we learn in the novel is a personage of stature and importance among the St. Petersburg elite. Anna is referring to Napoleon as the antichrist, she feels that he is routing Europe; and that the king of Russia, Alexander I, must save them all against this terrible and dreadful man. And so begins one of the most famous masterpieces of all time. WAR AND PEACE

has a simple plot which encompasses the valiant attempts by the Russian people to hold off a military invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte and the French. Some of the segments of the novel deal with war strategy which could have benefited leaders if they simply perhaps had read Tolstoy. As the story begins we find that the Russians have formed an unlikely alliance with the Austrians. Because of this alliance, we find the small and inadequate Russian army having to march from Moscow to Austria. That in of itself is daunting. This alliance falters at best and as a consequence the Russian army loses almost all of its army resulting oddly enough in several years of peace. The Russian aristocracy does not have to make any sacrifices at first and their lives continue just as before. Thus the meaning of the title, *WAR AND PEACE*. However, after 1810, another five years later, we find Napoleon becoming more successful in Europe and worries arise that he will plan next to invade the Russian homeland. In June of 1812, he does precisely that which the Russian people and the army feared most: he crossed the frontiers into Russia and the real war began. As Tolstoy described, "an event took place that was contrary to all human reason and human nature." We meet the Bolkonski's (the elder Prince, the younger Prince Andrei, his sister Princess Marya, Andrei's pregnant wife Lize), the Rostov's (the Count and Countess, Vera, Nicholai, Natasha, Sonya and Petya), the Bezukhov's (the dying Count, his illegitimate son Pierre and various relations to the dying man), the Kuragin's (Prince Vasili and his wife, the beautiful Helene, Anatole, and Hippolyte), Denisov, Dolohov, Boris, Kutuzov (the general) and about 600 characters in the book. The primary ones are the ones that I have named. Prince Andrei and Count Pierre Bezukhov (very important Tolstoy characters) are opposites in every way; yet are friends and their friendship, separate lives and families play a critical role in Tolstoy's novel. The Bolkonski's and the Rostov's lives weave and bind together as one goes further into the novel and these threads of their lives become a strong and durable fabric which will support these families as they progress through their respective years together. Though each of us, as do these characters, exercises free will; the decisions that we make (even years before certain life's events) depict the relationships that all of our decisions have upon each other and the impact they have on our future happiness or prosperity. Tolstoy even takes a detour at the end of the novel and digresses "much more than he should" about this and that...and how power is bestowed and basically how we reap what we sow (a familiar Tolstoy theme not always related to agriculture). The novel is quite long, and that is the reason I found that I picked up this book in the past and then put it down (not completely grasping the naming structures and not having time I felt to give it my full attention). However, after having finally taken the time to read this great manuscript, it really is a simple story about life, love (true or not), loyalty, friendship, responsibility (real accountability or feigned) and leadership. It is also once again a story of families and their love for each other and

how they are able to show their love for one another or how the love is still present; but remains emotionally hidden or ineffectual. And it is a story of how one must understand the true meaning of life and must be content in one's own skin; before love can truly blossom and be realized. Truthfully, the plot does revolve around the aspects of war and peace as it relates to Napoleon invading Russia; but it also shows a country growing and changing as the characters do in the novel. Each one of the families goes through its own reflective period of war and peace in their own lives as well. The story line is superb...if you like historical fiction; and the characterizations and their development are unparalleled.

Some Helpful Suggestions:

1. Take the time to read and/or listen to an unabridged version of this masterpiece (like the one done by Neville Jason). Just start out slowly and read a few chapters every day if you are limited in time. It is one of those novels that can be reread and not only do you enjoy the story line each time; you also come away from it learning a lot about life itself and you can profit from this reflection while embarking on your own personal path. Some of the events may ring true with your own life or with your own family. Even though the country and/or time period may be different; life, heart felt emotion remain quite the same.
2. Secure a translation that you like and/or a reader you can stay with. Go to your local bookstore and/or sample a chapter on line to see if you like the language used; do you like a more traditional translation much like Tolstoy's own language or would you prefer more modern jargon and interpretations. I prefer the traditional; but that is not always what works for everyone. If you want to listen to the book, make sure to listen to samples of the reader's voice to make sure that their voice is palatable to your tastes. Everyone's taste in sound is different.
3. Join a book club or an on line discussion group to keep you going and/or read or listen to the book with a friend or family member. These discussions will add to the enjoyment of reading this masterpiece. It really is meant (I feel) to be shared.
4. Get used to the Russian naming conventions and their use of nicknames. Write them down as you come across them and then you will know which characters to associate with which nicknames the next time. Nicknames are common with us today as well. If a girl's name is Jennifer, some may call her Jennifer, Jen, Jenny or if her middle name is Patricia (JP for short) and different members of the family could call her different pet names. This Russian novel is no different than real life.
5. I gave the following assistance when I reviewed Tolstoy's Anna Karenina and the characters and names in War and Peace follow the same rules regarding patronymics and names with three parts. Here is a reprint of the suggestion: "Sometimes the names of the characters themselves can be confusing: so a hint to the reader might be to think of each Russian character's name as having THREE PARTS: the FIRST part is the first name (examples here are for Levin and Kitty) like Konstantin or Ekaterina, the SECOND part is a patronymic which is the father's first name

accompanied by a suffix which means son of or daughter of like Dmitrich (son of Dmitri) or Alexandrovna (daughter of Alexander) and then the THIRD part which is the surname like Levin or Shcherbatskaya. Thus the explanations of the three part names for Ekaterina Alexandrovna Shcherbatskaya (nicknamed Kitty) and for Konstantin Dmitrich Levin (Levin). War and Peace is not a novel to be missed; very much like Anna Karenina (both by Leo Tolstoy). With both, but especially with War and Peace, you must envision that you will finish the book and keep at it. It really is not hard; you will get to know the characters in the book as if they were family members or best friends with all of their strengths and their frailties - the spectrum that makes these characters real in their humanness.

Note: ABOUT NEVILLE JASON: The Washington Post did an article on Neville Jason and how he could possibly be one of the few folks who has as they pointed out..."carefully enunciated each syllable of Leo Tolstoy's 560,000-word epic in an audiobook recently released by Naxos, an English publisher. Fifty-one CDs, roughly 70 hours of death, drama, history and philosophy. It took 23 days in the studio to record." Neville is exceptional..remember there were 600 characters in Tolstoy's book and quite a few primary characters and Neville did an exceptional job on all of them keeping their nuances and voices straight throughout the entire 70 hours of listening. I discovered how much I enjoyed listening to War and Peace after I read a particular set of chapters. It made it come alive for me as if I was in the midst of a theatrical presentation. The Washington Post went on to state the following about Neville Jason:"Jason, who lives in London, recently visited New York, and one Friday afternoon, he sat in a cousin's law offices and explained the art of endurance reading. The hard part, he says, isn't keeping your voice in good shape -- it's keeping focused."People call these readings. They're not readings. They're performances. You're acting and you're not just doing one part, you're doing dozens of parts. And you have to know what is coming up. If the sentence reads, 'Get out of here, he said angrily,' you need to know that, or you won't sound angry."To prepare for "War and Peace," he read the text for weeks. To keep his throat clear on days he recorded, he'd avoid dairy products and, for reasons that he can't fully explain, anything containing wheat. He'd start at 10 a.m. and knock off at 6, with plenty of breaks." - Washington Post

After listening to the complete unabridged version, this is the reader that I would recommend. Rating: 5 stars - A+ (Very highly recommended)

Bentley/October 2007

War & Peace, Volume 1 (The Complete Classics)

Neville Jason reads the entirety of Tolstoy's "War and Peace," originally for Naxos. Although unabridged, you must buy both segments. The second one is here: [A War & Peace, Volume 2 \(Classic Fiction\)](#) He's using the Louise and Aylmer Maude translation, by the way. I don't think he's

such a terrific reader, but he's worlds better than Frederick Davidson.

Tolstoy needs no review. The reader does an outstanding job of bringing this classic to life.

Not read or hear this yet. But so excited about getting to it. I know I am going to love it..I really do

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